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T H E  
American Tradition  
in Literature  
REVISED



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## Preface



The Shorter Edition of *The American Tradition in Literature* contains in one volume considerably more than half the literature included in the two-volume work, with more relative emphasis on major authors representing, in chronological and topical sequences, the achievements of American writers from the colonial period to the present. We have made literary merit our final criterion for selection, but our notes also emphasize the connections of a literary work with the history and thought of its period. Both in our notes and in our introductory essays we have confined ourselves to established knowledge, hoping to leave the reader free to pursue his own ideas and values without first having to contend with ours. Yet we have annotated liberally wherever substantial obscurities in the text might handicap a reader lacking immediate access to the appropriate reference books.

We have attempted to avoid the abbreviation of any literary work in which the form as a whole is meaningful. Novelists have been represented by novelettes or short stories where possible, or, as in the case of Wolfe and Dos Passos, by excerpts originally published independently in periodicals. Among uncut works of unusual length the reader will find three short novels—Melville's *Billy Budd*, Mark Twain's *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*, and Faulkner's *The Bear* (often reprinted in part)—and a full-length play by O'Neill. Lengthy works, such as Franklin's *Autobiography* and Thoreau's *Walden*, which could be cut without damage to some fundamental organic integrity have, of necessity, been abridged. In all instances exclusions are represented by three asterisks, and except where printed between brackets, titles are those of the original. Where possible, as in *Leaves of Grass*, we have suggested the plan of the whole. Since masterpieces endure, many of our selections are, and should be, familiar, but wherever it seemed possible to make a fresh substitution without loss of values we have done so. For example, we have included certain less familiar poems of Eliot, and we have secured permission to exceed previous limitations upon the amount of material quoted, or the titles available for anthologies, from the works of Dreiser, Cather, Hemingway, and Farrell.

We have scrupulously attempted to provide in each case a faithful copy of the text which in our judgment is the best edition of the work. Melville's *Billy Budd* appears in a text which has been compared with manuscript sources and is here printed for the first time. The poems of Emily Dickinson also represent a fresh comparison with the original manuscripts, since we were kindly given permission to follow the text newly established by Thomas H. Johnson in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1955). The source of each text is indicated either in the bibliographical note or in a footnote. We have dated the works where possible. The date at the lower right margin is that of first publication in a volume, and this may be preceded by the date of first periodical publication, if it is deemed important. If the date of composition is established and is thought to have significance, it will be found at the bottom left margin of the selection.

The increase in size by 128 pages of the 1961 edition has permitted the allotment of greater space for authors already represented and the inclusion of a number of new authors. New texts are: Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"; selections from Paine's *The Age of Reason*; a sequence of episodes characterizing Cooper's *Leather-Stocking Tales*; Emerson's "Divinity School Address"; Poe's "The Purloined Letter"; Howells' "Editha"; James's "The Beast in the Jungle"; and the complete text of Whitman's "Song of Myself." New authors now represented are the following twentieth-century poets: Marianne Moore, Richard Eberhart, Muriel Rukeyser, Robert Lowell, and Richard Wilbur. Throughout the work the author headnotes and bibliographies have been brought up to date and revised where necessary to reflect recent scholarship and the continued publication of living authors.

The three editors have collaborated on this work as a whole, and each also assumed final responsibility for a designated task. Mr. Bradley served as general editor. He also prepared the historical essay introducing each of the four literary periods and the author headnotes and textual annotations for the period before the Civil War. Mr. Bradley was responsible for the entire section representing the literature since 1914. Mr. Beatty edited the texts of the literature before the Civil War; Mr. Long edited the texts of the period from 1865 to 1914 and collaborated with Mr. Bradley in preparing the bio-bibliographical materials and footnotes.

The editors again express their gratitude to numerous colleagues who gave expert advice regarding the selection of texts, and who have assisted in the task of discovering and correcting errors. We are grateful for the services rendered by the libraries of Vanderbilt and Baylor Universities, and particularly for the assistance of the Rare Book Collection of the University of Pennsylvania in establishing the texts and preparing the bibliographies.

E.S.B., R.C.B., E.H.L.



# The Literature of the Colonies and the Revolution



There was an enormous amount of writing in America during the first century of settlement. The adventurers and settlers wrote descriptions of the country, like those by Captain John Smith of Virginia, the most famous of the scores of chroniclers; they wrote picturesquely of explorations and discoveries, of Indian wars and captivities; they made personal journals of their experiences. They created their instruments of government and law; they recorded the history of their colonies, often for political or economic purposes, but also, in New England especially, to "justify the ways of God to men" in the New Jerusalem. A large number of these works were printed, in England or on the Continent. Most of them were merely timely, although useful for future historians; but with a frequency quite amazing, in view of the physical conditions of life in the New World, there appeared the writer who

was also a great person, who communicated the richness of his spirit or character in writings that time has not tarnished. Our colonial literature became a great reservoir of material and inspiration for that of the nineteenth century; for readers today it still provides an understanding of those bedrock American experiences which developed the national character and our peculiarly American institutions.

Although the people of the colonies derived their language and political institutions from Great Britain, they were to become increasingly indebted, as the British themselves had, to a variety of European cultures. The French, Germans, Swedes, and Dutch—and the Jews from Germany and Portugal, who appeared in the Middle Colonies especially during the eighteenth century—were merely following in the wake of European continentals as far back as Eric the Red and Leif Ericsson. Also be-

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fore the British, the Spaniards, in the half century following the voyage of Columbus, had rimmed the Gulf of Mexico and pushed westward to the Pacific. For all their hardihood, the early settlers could only vaguely comprehend the natural immensity that confronted their efforts—an unimaginable empire, between the Isthmus of Panama and the Arctic, of nearly eight million square miles, more than half of it covered by ancient forests of fabulous density. The land stretched before them in majesty and mystery, while the Indians told of wonders yet unseen—vast peaks and mighty rivers, shifting sands and ancient golden cities overrun by ruin.

It is no wonder if the American imagination bears, to this day, the indelible mark of this immeasurable richness, and of those dark people who possessed the land before them. America was *El Dorado*, the golden western limit of Renaissance energies; and this great tide was still at flood when the Reformation flung out another restless host for whom America became the Promised Land of the human spirit. At the same time that the New World invited the colonial ambitions of rival empires, or lured the adventurer for pelts and pelf, it was also holding out the promise of new freedom and new hope for men of some sober purpose or lofty idealism forbidden in the Old World. The majority of them, and predominantly those who came to rest in New England and the Middle Colonies, were products, in some sort, of the Protestant Ref-

ormation, a fact which continues to influence the life and thought of the United States.

##### VIRGINIA AND THE SOUTH

However, the first permanent English settlement was the result not of religious but of mercantile motives. The Virginia Company promoted the Jamestown colony (1607), expecting that its plantations would provide goods for the British trade and would attract the Englishmen who needed homes and land. Their conception of the new world was so unrealistic that they brought with them to Virginia a perfumer and several tailors. Epidemic fevers and Indian raids during the first few years reduced the colony as fast as new recruits could be brought in on the infrequent supply ships. The Indians, who had been counted on for cheap labor, refused to be enslaved or even to work. Innocent of the European concept of property, they resented the settlers who fenced and cultivated their hunting grounds, and they retaliated with blood and fire. Still, somehow the colony increased, first at Jamestown, then at Williamsburg, the handsome colonial capital where, in 1693, William and Mary was founded as the second college in North America.

During the seventeenth century the South was not a land of large plantations. However, the eventual shift from a yeoman to a slave-holding plantation economy was an inevitable result of British mercantilism, an abusive colonial system to be sure, but one which, for a time, perhaps actually benefited the



agricultural colonies of the South. The Navigation Acts of the late seventeenth century were intended to compel the colonists to sell to the mother country all their raw materials and agricultural exports, for which they were to receive in exchange British manufactured products. Since British shipping was given a monopoly of the carriage, at rates fixed in England, the mother country was assured of a credit balance. In the northern colonies, where natural conditions favored manufactures and commerce, this exploitation in time became intolerable, and provided one of the deep-rooted reasons for the Revolution. Although the southern plantation colonies were restless at being confined to the British market, their crops were generally salable there. The southern plantation wealth grew steadily, supporting, in the eighteenth century, a tidewater aristocracy that produced some families of great culture, whose sons enjoyed the advantages of British and continental universities and built up fine private libraries. They ultimately produced such leaders and statesmen as the Byrds, Jefferson, and Madison. Yet, before the period of the Revolution, they added but little to the creative literature of the colonies. This does not seem surprising. The urban centers were small and widely separated; and the population, much dispersed, was composed of a few privileged aristocrats, thousands of slaves, and a white middle class of generally unlettered frontiersmen and small yeoman farmers.

#### NEW ENGLAND

In the New England colonies, as has been implied, the situation was quite different. At Plymouth (1620), Salem (1628), Massachusetts Bay (1630), and other nearby spots soon settled, more than twenty thousand Englishmen found new homes. A considerable number were learned, especially the Puritan clergymen and governors; and some of them were great men. Even in the seventeenth century they produced a considerable body of writing. Yet they were not literary people in the professional sense, and they were intent upon subduing a wilderness, making homes, and building a new civil society, on which they had staked their lives, and in some instances, their fortunes.

It was not long until the colony at Massachusetts Bay assumed the natural hegemony of New England. Here was the physical situation—a harbor and river—for expansion into a cluster of small towns in close association with each other. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, John Winthrop, a strong Puritan, moved the seat of his company from London to Boston Bay, thus making the chartered company into an overseas colony with limited, but then quite unprecedented, powers of self-government. The Puritans who followed Winthrop were thrifty, and they thrived. They initiated a town-meeting government, popular elections, a bicameral council, and other novelties that were to become parts of the machinery of democracy. They can justly be

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charged with intolerance, of course, for they soon achieved a consensus on matters of dogma, and they had no such problems of diversity as made toleration inevitable in the Middle Colonies. But in New England such outcasts as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson soon founded colonies of their own, thus accelerating the outward flow of forces from Boston into New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. By 1643 there was the beginning of the New England Federation for mutual security and co-operative economic enterprise.

### PURITANISM

The earliest English Puritans were devout members of the Church of England and had no desire to produce a schism. By the time of Elizabeth's reign the Church of England was clearly Protestant in respect to its separation from Rome. The Puritans wished the reform to be carried much further, in order to simplify or "purify" the creeds and rituals and to diminish the authority of the bishops, but still no official break was intended. In 1633, however, the elevation of Archbishop Laud put the Church of England in the control of a tyrant who was determined to root out "Calvinist" dissenters, Presbyterian or Puritan, by legal persecution. The consequent soul-searching among Puritans, who were never a "sect" in the sense that the Presbyterians were, carried them closer to certain fundamental tenets of John Calvin (1509-1564); and the most powerful and radical of them, unwilling to submit to the abu-

sive and cruel laws against them, soon formed the core of the New England clergy. It should be emphasized, however, that the Puritans did not regard the word of Calvin as the word of authority. They agreed with him when they thought him reasonable, but there were many aspects of his theology that they found unreasonable and so disregarded.

The ideas of Martin Luther (1483-1546), the earlier leader of the great Reformation, likewise became a permanent influence on both religious and civil institutions of American democracy. Concepts of authority, both civil and ecclesiastical, had been everywhere slowly weakening; they were shattered, wherever Luther's words were received, by his doctrine of the "priesthood of believers." "Neither Pope or Bishop nor any other man," he said, "has a right to impose a single syllable of law upon a Christian man without his consent."

Calvin's *Institutes*, on the other hand, authorized a theological system in certain respects as rigid as that of the Church of Rome, but its ultimate official authority was the consensus of its constituents, and not a hierarchy. In this system the New England "congregational meeting" was inherent from the beginning. In earlier stages of the Reformation it was held that the religion of the ruler should be the religion of the country he dominated, but Calvin, like Catholic thinkers, insisted that the church should be independent. The state should, in fact, be its servant. The result, in

early New England during the Puritan period, was that the leading clergymen, powerful and well-trained, were for a time the dominating temporal as well as spiritual authority; but by 1700 their civil powers began to crumble under the weight of new secular influence.

✓ In common with all advocates of strict Christian orthodoxy, American Puritans subscribed to Calvin's insistence that the omnipotent God had created the first man, Adam, in his own perfect image, that Adam in his willfulness had broken God's covenant, and that, as *The New England Primer* put it, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." It was Calvin's dogmas of predestination and grace that set him sharply apart from Luther on the one hand and the Roman Catholic Church on the other. The redemption of the individual came only by regeneration, the work of the spirit of God "in the souls of the elect and of them alone." Calvin and the Puritans put a special emphasis on the doctrine of original depravity. Adam's children were not mere automatons of evil impulse, since they possessed, as Adam had, a limited freedom of the will to make the good or evil choice. Still, nothing in man's personal power could mitigate the original sinfulness of his nature. Hence, redemption must be a free gift of God's saving grace, made to those predestined to receive it. No person could earn grace by good works, since good works, in themselves, could only be the result and fruition of grace. These doctrines were characteristically re-

flected in the interpretation of Christ the Redeemer as representing God's New Covenant with mankind, as Adam represented the Old Covenant.

These doctrines, to which Jonathan Edwards gave the classic recapitulation when Puritanism was already waning, have been interpreted by many modern critics as excessively grim and gloomy. A stereotype of the Puritan has been created, depicting him as a dour, thinly ascetic fellow employing censorship and blue laws to impose his prudish standards on others. Most of the Puritans would have voted to put him in the stocks. It is true that extreme zealots among them, overinterpreting their dogmas, despised this mortal life in contrast to the next. The same zealots, during an outbreak of hysterical superstition, persecuted the "witches." Yet the Puritans in general were lovers of life, their clergy were well-educated scholars in whom the Renaissance lamp of humanism still burned. They did not forbid gaily colored clothes if they could get them; they developed a pleasing domestic architecture and good arts and crafts on American soil; they liked the drink even if they despised the drunkard; they feared both ignorance and emotional evangelism, and made of their religious thought a rigorous intellectual discipline. They were the earliest colonists to insist on common schools; they had the first college (Harvard, 1636) and the first printing press in the colonies (Cambridge, 1638); and they were responsible for the most abundant and memorable

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literature created in the colonies before 1740. In their influence on American life, there is much more to bless them for than to condemn.

### THE MIDDLE COLONIES

Lying between New England to the northeast and the sprawling farmlands of the southern colonies stretched the provinces of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. The seed of American toleration was sown in this area, with its diversity of national strains, for here the melting pot that produced Crèvecoeur's conception of an American boiled with a briskness unknown elsewhere along the Atlantic seaboard. Dutch and Swedish colonies were established in New York and Pennsylvania before the British came; the tolerance of Pennsylvania attracted large numbers of German and French-Huguenot refugees; and Jewish merchants early appeared in New York and Philadelphia.

Of all the colonies, the Middle Colonies enjoyed the best geographical location, the easiest access to the great inland waterways and stored natural resources of the continent, the largest economic promise, resulting from a fine balance of agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial potentials. By 1750, the Quaker city of Philadelphia had become the unofficial colonial capital by virtue of its location, the size of its population, and the volume of its commercial activity, in which respects it surpassed any city, except London, in the British Empire. The cultural institutions of the Middle Colonies, somewhat differ-

ent from those of New England, were to prove quite as important in providing those basic conditions and ideas which, during the revolutionary crises of the eighteenth century, were formally welded into a national character and a frame of democratic government then unique among the nations of the world.

Of the many groups present in the Pennsylvania colony, the Quakers were the most homogeneous. Although these Friends, in the beginning, were drawn primarily from the humbler ranks of the English middle classes—they were artisans, tradesmen, and yeoman farmers for the most part—their American leader, William Penn, was one of the best-trained men in the colonies, and one of the greatest. He was a follower of George Fox, the English shepherd and cobbler whose powerful evangelism welded his disciples into the Religious Society of Friends. The early Quaker theology was fundamentally closer to Luther's than to Calvin's. It was less concerned with the original depravity of man than with the abounding grace of God. But Fox and his followers went far beyond Luther's rebellion against the delegated authority of pope or bishop; Fox taught that the ultimate authority for any person was the "inner light," the divine immanence, revealed to his own soul. Thus the Quaker worshiped in quiet, waiting upon the inward revelation of unity with the Eternal.

Penn had inherited from his father a large financial claim upon the government of Charles

II, and in 1681 he secured in settlement the vast colonial estate which the King named Pennsylvania. As Proprietor, Penn exercised great powers, but in writing his famous "Frame of Government" he ordained a free commonwealth, bestowing wide privileges of self-government upon the people. Convinced that "the nations want a precedent," he declared that "any government is free to the people where the laws rule \* \* \* and the people are party to the laws. \* \* \* Liberty without obedience is confusion, and obedience without liberty is slavery." These words, and the precedent which he established by his "Holy Experiment," remained alive in the American colonies, much later to be embodied in the Declaration of Independence of the nation and in its constitutional instrument of government, both written in Penn's city.

Under these favorable conditions the colony thrived. Like the Puritans, the Quakers quickly made provision for education. Four years after Penn's arrival, they had their first press (1686) and a public school chartered by the Proprietor. In 1740 Philadelphians chartered the Charity School, soon called the Academy, and later the University of Pennsylvania, the fourth colonial college (following Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale). During the same period the Middle Colonies founded three other colleges: Princeton (the College of New Jersey, 1746), Columbia (King's College, 1754), and Rutgers (Queen's College, 1766).

The energies of the inhabitants of these colonies of mixed cultures, centering upon Pennsylvania, fostered the development of science and medicine, technical enterprise and commerce, journalism and government—Penn, for example, made the first proposal for a union of the colonies—but in spite of the remarkable currency of the printed word among them, they produced less than New England of lasting literary value until after the first quarter of the eighteenth century. William Penn, however, proved to be a genuine writer, if on a limited scale. Besides his famous "Frame of Government," two of his works have continued to live: *No Cross No Crown* (1669), a defense of his creed, and *Some Fruits of Solitude* (1693), a collection of essays on the conduct of life and his Christian faith. Many of the early American Friends published journals, but only one, that of John Woolman, survives as great literature. Of the many early colonial travelers and observers, some from the Middle Colonies produced literary records comparable with those of Byrd of Virginia and Madam Knight of Boston. Crèvecoeur, perhaps the most gifted of the colonial travelers, settled in Pennsylvania and later in upstate New York. John Bartram and his more famous son, William, established a long tradition of natural history in Philadelphia. Each left an important record of his travels and observations of American natural history, scientifically valuable, and, in William's case, a work of genuine literature. On set-

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tlings in this country in 1804, the greater naturalist and painter John James Audubon made Philadelphia his home.

### THE ENLIGHTENMENT

These Middle Colonies, as a result of their mixed culture and central location, became the natural center for activities of mutual interest, such as the inter-colonial convention or congress. A growing sense of unity and independence characterized the second great period of American cultural history, beginning about 1725. Politically, this spirit encouraged the growth of a loose confederation, disturbed by the British colonial wars on the frontier and by "intolerable" British trade and taxation policies. In succession it produced the Revolution, the federal and constitutional union of the states, and the international recognition of the hegemony of the United States on the North American continent by about 1810, roughly the time of Jefferson's retirement as president, when a new national period began in literature and political life. During these years, the frontier moved beyond the Alleghenies, leaving behind it an established seaboard culture, and, in such cities as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, a growing spirit of metropolitan sophistication.

The Enlightenment and its rationalistic spirit infused the minds and the acts of American leaders. Earlier religious mysticisms, local in character, were now overlaid by larger concerns for general toleration, civil rights, and a more comprehensive democracy in government.

The conflict of ideas at the beginning of this period is well represented in a comparison of the contemporaries Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, both among the greatest early Americans. Edwards represented the fullest intellectual development of the Calvinistic Puritan; his hard intellect and authoritarian convictions were tempered by human tenderness and spiritual sensitivity. Yet the last member of the Puritan hierarchy, Cotton Mather, had met fundamental and final opposition about the time Edwards was born. The secular spirit, the immigration of a new population, and the development of the urban spirit of enterprise and commerce would have doomed the Puritan commonwealth even if the Puritans themselves had not outgrown it.

The Age of Reason manifested a rationalistic conception of man in his relations with nature and God, suggested the extension of principles of equality and social justice, and encouraged the belief that man might assume greater control of nature without offending the majesty of God. If the universe, as Newton suggested, somewhat resembled a clock of unimaginable size, why might not man, by studying its laws, learn to utilize them for his benefit? The writings of John Locke (1632-1704) had enormous influence, and American readers also knew the writings of Locke's early student, Shaftesbury, and of various other British and French rationalists. Among the French writers, Rousseau and Quesnay, the best known in America, were

both influential in their sociological ideas. Rousseau, in emphasizing the social contract as the "natural" basis for government, suggested a consistency between the laws of nature and those of society. Quesnay and his physiocratic followers strengthened this doctrine by asserting that society was based on the resources of nature, on land itself, thus stimulating the agrarian thought that was so attractive to Jefferson. Rationalism applied to theology produced Deism, but the degrees of Deism ranged widely, from the casual to the dialectical severity of Tom Paine. For the confirmed Deist, God was the first cause, but the hand of God was more evident in the mechanism of nature than in scriptural revelation; the Puritan belief in miraculous intervention and supernatural manifestations was regarded as blasphemy against the divine Creator of the immutable harmony and perfection of all things. But most enlightened rationalists confined their logic to practical affairs, or, like Franklin and Jefferson, entertained a mild Deism that diminished as they grew older.

#### THE BROADENING OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

During this revolutionary end of the eighteenth century, Rationalism, reflected in the neo-classical spirit in literature, began to wane; at the same time a nascent romanticism appeared in life and literature. In England the influence of Pope was quickly superseded by the romanticism of Gray, Chatterton, Goldsmith, and the periodical

essayists. Before Tom Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, the age of revolution was well advanced; and the American and French revolutions advocated rationalistic instruments of government in support of romantic ideals of freedom and individualism. American writers, like the British, responded to these commingled influences, as for example, in the case of Jefferson or Freneau. The latter, an avowed Deist and a neoclassicist in his earliest poems, became in his later nature lyrics a forerunner of the romantic Bryant. This was the pattern of his age, in which the romantic movement, which was to dominate our literature after 1810, was already present in embryo. It was an age of magnificent literary energies, of vast upheaval, spiritual and social; and the rapid growth of publishing provided a forum for contestants of all ranks. The first newspaper to succeed in the colonies, the *Boston News-Letter*, had appeared in 1704; by the time of the Revolution there were nearly fifty. No magazine appeared until 1741, but after that date magazines flourished, and by the time of Washington's inauguration (1789) there had been nearly forty. Periodical publication gave a hearing to scores of essayists, propagandists, and political writers; to such leading authors as Paine and Freneau; and to lesser writers still remembered, such as Francis Hopkinson, whose verse satires plagued the British, and John Dickinson, a lawyer whose *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1767-1768) skillfully presented the

colonial position in various newspapers in the hope of securing British moderation before it was too late. William Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia, made his *American Magazine* (1757-1758) a vehicle for a talented coterie of his protégés and students—the short-lived Nathaniel Evans, Francis Hopkinson, and Thomas Godfrey, the first American playwright. Such verse as theirs, both satirical and sentimental, abounded in the periodicals, but although there had been scores of American poets by the time of the Revolution, only Freneau and Taylor have been greatly admired for their literary values. Among still earlier poets, Anne Bradstreet, who died in 1672, is remembered for her small but genuine lyric gift, appearing amid inhospitable conditions in Puritan Massachusetts, and Michael Wigglesworth is remembered for *The Day of Doom* (1662), the most popular Puritan poem, whose lengthy description of the Last Judgment conferred the benison of penance along with the fascinations of melodrama.

Theatrical activity had appeared sporadically ever since the beginning of the century. By 1749 a stock company was established in Philadelphia, and its seasonal migrations encouraged the building of theaters and the growth of other companies of players, in New York, Boston, Williamsburg, and Charleston. The native players, and visiting actors from England, devoted themselves principally to Elizabethan revivals and classics of the French theater, but it was

an age of great talent on the stage, and the support of the theater, in spite of continuous opposition from religious objectors, illustrates the steady increase of urban sophistication. Thomas Godfrey's *Prince of Parthia*, the first native tragedy to be performed, reached the stage in 1767. During the Revolution, drama survived only as effective political satire. Native authorship revived in 1787, with the appearance of Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, which still retains an archaic vitality; in its day it established the stereotype of "Brother Jonathan" for the homespun American character. Early native playwrights included two prominent writers of fiction, Susannah Rowson and H. H. Brackenridge. William Dunlap, a portrait painter, among whose many plays *André* (1798) remains a genuine, if now outdated work, lived far into the Knickerbocker period and was the first large-scale producer-playwright of our literature, although he went bankrupt in this enterprise.

Meanwhile, a native fiction had taken root. The great age of British fiction had begun about 1719, and such English novelists as Defoe, Fielding, Richardson, and even Smollett and Sterne were widely read in the colonies. Soon after the Revolution, however, fiction of native authorship appeared, first represented in two domestic novels, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), by William Hill Brown, and *Charlotte Temple* (1794), by the English-born Susannah H. Rowson, which has been reprinted even in the twentieth century.



A really fine picaresque novel, *Modern Chivalry*, by the Pennsylvania jurist H. H. Brackenridge, appeared in five parts between 1792 and 1815. Its author's learning in the classics and his familiarity with the great picaresque tradition of Cervantes were here combined with an acid and clever satire of early American failures in democratic politics. A third European fictional tradition, the Gothic romance of terror, found its American exemplar in Charles Brockden Brown, another Philadelphian, four of whose romances made literary history, if not great literature, between 1798 and 1800.

Freneau is the most important bridge between the classicism of the eighteenth century and the full-fledged romanticism of the nineteenth. Late in the eighteenth century, however, the seven so-called Connecticut Wits, most of them associated with Yale, attracted great attention by devoting themselves to a new national poetic literature. Three of them achieved a considerable distinction in life, but none of them affected the literature of America except in the historical sense. John Trumbull (1750-1831) is best remembered for his satires: *The Progress of Dullness* (1772), an amusing attack on "educators" which makes excellent sense if only passable poetry, and *M'Fingal* (1775-1782), a bur-

lesque epic blasting American Toryism. Timothy Dwight reached distinction as president of Yale, but of his poems only *Greenfield Hill* (1794) rises occasionally above his didactic solemnity. Joel Barlow (1754-1812) was a large-minded liberal and an American patriot, but no one who has been condemned to read his pioneer American epic, *The Vision of Columbus* (1787) or its even longer later version, *The Columbiad* (1807), can quite forgive him. His shorter mock-epic, *The Hasty Pudding* (1796), however, is the very entertaining work of a generous mind.

The literature of America up to the end of the eighteenth century needs no apology. The minor literature was abundant; it was serviceable to its time, and in retrospect it seems no more odd or feeble than the common stock of popular expression of the earlier periods of any nation. What is profoundly important is the wealth of true literature, the inspired expression of great men writing often under conditions unfavorable to literary expression, which appeared from the first, and increasingly through the years, in an abundance entirely out of proportion to the size of the population and the expectations that might be entertained for a country so new, and so wild and sparsely settled during its first century.



# The Puritan Culture

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## WILLIAM BRADFORD

(1590-1657)

William Bradford was one of the greatest of colonial Americans, a man large in spirit and wisdom, wholly consecrated to a mission in which he regarded himself as an instrument of God. The early history of Plymouth Colony was the history of his leadership, and tiny Plymouth occupies a position in history wholly incommensurate with its size.

Like the patriarchs of the Old Testament, William Bradford in his annals recorded God's "choosing" of His people, their exile, and their wanderings. Even after twelve years in Holland, as Bradford wrote in the language of *Hebrews*, "they knew they were pilgrims," and must follow the cloud and fire to a land promised, if at first unpromising, their new Zion. In 1630 Bradford wrote his first ten chapters, dealing with the persecutions of the Separatists in Scrooby, England, their flight to Holland in 1608, and their history until they landed at Plymouth in 1620. His "Second Book," dealing with their history in Plymouth from 1620 until 1647, was written "in pieces," most of it

before 1646.

Bradford was born of a yeoman farmer and a tradesman's daughter in Yorkshire. Orphaned in his first year by his father's death and trained for farming by relatives, almost without formal education, he was a well-read man who brought a considerable library with him to Plymouth at the age of thirty. When he was twelve he had begun the earnest study of the Bible; at sixteen he joined the Separatist group then forming at nearby Scrooby, an act which taxed both courage and conviction; at eighteen he accompanied the group to Holland to escape persecution, perhaps death. In Holland he lost a small patrimony in business, became a weaver, and achieved relative prosperity. He also read widely in English and Dutch, and somewhat in French, Greek, and Hebrew. At twenty-seven he was a leader of his people in Leyden, a member of the committee which arranged their pilgrimage. On November 11, 1620, just after the *Mayflower* made landfall at Cape Cod, he signed the Mayflower Compact; he was one

of the group that explored the unknown shore; he was one of those who, on December 11, entered Plymouth Bay in the teeth of a snowstorm, and stepped ashore—according to legend—on Plymouth Rock. His first wife was lost overboard in his absence, one of the fifty who, out of the 102 Pilgrims who reached Plymouth, were to die within the year. Among these was the first elected governor, John Carver.

Bradford, elected to succeed Governor Carver, probably had already begun to write a sort of history of the colony. The evidence is inconclusive, but it is believed that Bradford and Edward Winslow consolidated their journals and sent them for anonymous publication to George Morton, English agent for the Pilgrims. Morton, as compiler, signed himself "G. Mourt," possibly for political reasons, and the *Relation or Journall of the Beginning and Proceedings of the Plantation Settled at Plimouth*, generally known as *Mourt's Relation*, appeared in London in 1622.

From 1621 until his death, Bradford probably possessed more power than any other colonial governor; yet he refused the opportunity to become sole proprietor, and maintained the democratic principles suggested in the Mayflower Compact. He was re-elected thirty times, for a total term of thirty-three years

—in two years no elections were held, and in five terms, "by importunity," he succeeded in passing his authority to another. He persuaded the surviving Pilgrim Fathers to share their original rights with the entire body of Freemen; at the same time he led the small group of "Old Comers" who controlled the fishing and trading monopolies, not for private gain, but to liquidate the debt to the British investors who had financed their undertaking. He seldom left Plymouth, where he died. His worldly estate was a small house and some orchards and little else, but he was one of his country's first great men.

The first edition of the *History of Plymouth Plantation*, edited by Charles Deane, appeared in Boston, 1856, but it has been superseded. The standard edition is *History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, 2 vols., edited, with notes, by W. C. Ford, Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, 1912; but even this edition is unreliable, there being some twenty-five minor errors in the transcription of the Mayflower Compact alone. For the general reader the best edition is *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison, New York, 1952. The selections in this text have been reproduced from this edition, in which spelling and punctuation have been regularized in accordance with modern standards.

*Mourt's Relation*, first published as *A Relation or Journall of the Beginning and Proceedings of the Plantation Settled at Plimoth*, London, 1622, is available in a new edition, edited by Theodore Besterman, London, 1939.

Good biographical studies are Bradford Smith, *Bradford of Plymouth*, 1951; Samuel Eliot Morison, "Introduction," *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, 1952; and Samuel Eliot Morison, "William Bradford," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1933.

## From Of Plymouth Plantation

Chapter IX: Of their Voyage, and how they Passed the Sea;  
and of their Safe Arrival at Cape Cod

\* \* \*

Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element. And no marvel if they were thus joyful, seeing wise Seneca was so affected with sailing a few miles on the coast of his own Italy, as he affirmed, that he had rather remain twenty years on his way by land than pass by sea to any place in a short time, so tedious and dreadful was the same unto him.<sup>1</sup>

But here I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this poor people's present condition; and so I think will the reader, too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which went before), they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succour. It is recorded in Scripture<sup>2</sup> as a mercy to the Apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear) were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise. And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah<sup>3</sup> to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand

1. Bradford cites Epistle LIII. His words, "he had rather remain \* \* \* in a short time," are translated from Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, LIII, Section 5.

2. Bradford cites Acts xxviii. Verse 2

refers to the Melitans' kindness to the shipwrecked Paul.

3. From Mount Pisgah in Palestine (also called Mount Nebo; in Arabic, Ras Siyagha; now in Jordan), Moses saw the Promised Land (Deuteronomy xxxiv: 1-4).

upon them with a weatherbeaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue. If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar and gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world. If it be said they had a ship to succour them, it is true; but what heard they daily from the master and company? But that with speed they should look out a place (with their shallop) where they would be, at some near distance; for the season was such as he would not stir from thence till a safe harbor was discovered by them, where they would be, and he might go without danger; and that victuals consumed apace but he must and would keep sufficient for themselves and their return. Yea, it was muttered by some that if they got not a place in time, they would turn them and their goods ashore and leave them. Let it also be considered what weak hopes of supply and succour they left behind them, that might bear up their minds in this sad condition and trials they were under; and they could not but be very small. It is true, indeed, the affections and love of their brethren at Leyden<sup>4</sup> was cordial and entire towards them, but they had little power to help them or themselves; and how the case stood between them and the merchants at their coming away hath already been declared.

What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace? May not and ought not the children of these fathers rightly say: "Our fathers were Englishmen which came over this great ocean, and were ready to perish in this wilderness; but they cried unto the Lord, and He heard their voice and looked on their adversity,"<sup>5</sup> etc. "Let them therefore praise the Lord, because He is good: and His mercies endure forever. Yea, let them which have been redeemed of the Lord, shew how He hath delivered them from the hand of the oppressor. When they wandered in the desert wilderness out of the way, and found no city to dwell in, both hungry and thirsty, their soul was overwhelmed in them." "Let them confess before the Lord His lovingkindness and His wonderful works before the sons of men."<sup>6</sup>

4. Leyden in Holland, where nearly half the exiled Separatists remained when these Pilgrims set out for America by way of England.

5. Bradford cites Deuteronomy xxvi: 5-7, referring to God's deliverance of

Israel from bondage in Egypt.

6. Bradford cites "107 Psa: v. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8," of which these closing lines, beginning with "Let them therefore praise the Lord . . .," are a paraphrase.

*Chapter X: Showing How they Sought out a place of  
Habitation; and What Befell them Thereabout*

\* \* \*

After this,<sup>3</sup> the shallop being got ready, they set out again for the better discovery of this place, and the master of the ship desired to go himself. So there went some thirty men but found it to be no harbor for ships but only for boats. There was also found two of their houses covered with mats, and sundry of their implements in them, but the people were run away and could not be seen. Also there was found more of their corn and of their beans of various colours; the corn and beans they brought away, purposing to give them full satisfaction when they should meet with any of them as, about some six months afterward they did, to their good content.<sup>4</sup>

And here is to be noted a special providence of God, and a great mercy to this poor people, that here they got seed to plant them corn the next year, or else they might have starved, for they had none nor any likelihood to get any till the season had been past, as the sequel did manifest. Neither is it likely they had had this, if the first voyage had not been made, for the ground was now all covered with snow and hard frozen; but the Lord is never wanting unto His in their greatest needs; let His holy name have all the praise. \* \* \*

From hence they departed and coasted all along<sup>5</sup> but discerned no place likely for harbor; and therefore hasted to a place that their pilot (one Mr. Coppin who had been in the country before) did assure them was a good harbor, which he had been in, and they might fetch it before night; of which they were glad for it began to be foul weather.

After some hours' sailing it began to snow and rain, and about the middle of the afternoon the wind increased and the sea became very rough, and they broke their rudder, and it was as much as two men could do to steer her with a couple of oars. But their pilot bade them be of good cheer for he saw the harbor; but the storm

3. The Pilgrims have already explored the shore, finding a pond and a creek and, close by, some caches of Indian corn.

4. Morison notes that this second expedition explored the Pamet and Little Pamet rivers from November 28 to November 30, and that descendants of these Nauset Indians still survive at Mashpee, Cape Cod.

5. This is the third exploring expedition, begun on December 6/16, 1620, after several weeks of confinement on the *Mayflower* by "foul weather." Ten

men, including Bradford, in their shallop, are to explore as far as Plymouth, seeking a better ship's harbor than the Pamet or Ipswich, previously examined. They have successfully withstood the first severe Indian attack, and are now proceeding to Plymouth. The dates in Bradford's manuscript are Old Style (following the Julian calendar), ten days earlier than the same dates according to the present (Gregorian) calendar. In these notes, important verifiable dates are given in both forms, as above.

increasing, and night drawing on, they bore what sail they could to get in, while they could see. But herewith they broke their mast in three pieces and their sail fell overboard in a very grown sea, so as they had like to have been cast away. Yet by God's mercy they recovered themselves, and having the flood<sup>6</sup> with them, struck into the harbor. But when it came to, the pilot was deceived in the place, and said the Lord be merciful unto them for his eyes never saw that place before; and he and the master's mate would have run her ashore in a cove full of breakers before the wind. But a lusty seaman which steered bade those which rowed, if they were men, about with her or else they were all cast away; the which they did with speed. So he bid them be of good cheer and row lustily, for there was a fair sound before them, and he doubted not but they should find one place or other where they might ride in safety. And though it was very dark and rained sore, yet in the end they got under the lee of a small island and remained there all that night in safety.<sup>7</sup> But they knew not this to be an island till morning, but were divided in their minds; some would keep the boat for fear they might be amongst the Indians, others were so wet and cold they could not endure but got ashore, and with much ado got fire (all things being so wet); and the rest were glad to come to them, for after midnight the wind shifted to the northwest and it froze hard.

But though this had been a day and night of much trouble and danger unto them, yet God gave them a morning of comfort and refreshing (as usually He doth to His children) for the next day was a fair, sunshining day, and they found themselves to be on an island secure from the Indians, where they might dry their stuff, fix their pieces and rest themselves; and gave God thanks for His mercies in their manifold deliverances. And this being the last day of the week, they prepared there to keep the Sabbath.

On Monday they sounded the harbor and found it fit for shipping, and marched into the land and found divers cornfields and little running brooks, a place (as they supposed) fit for situation.<sup>8</sup> At least it was the best they could find, and the season and their present necessity made them glad to accept of it. So they returned to their ship again with this news to the rest of their people, which did much comfort their hearts.

6. "The mean rise and fall of tide there is about 9 ft. Plymouth Bay \* \* \* is a bad place to enter in thick weather with a sea running and night coming on" [Morison's note].

7. Morison identifies the anchorage as the lee of Squish Head, and the island there as Clarks Island, where they spent Saturday and Sunday, December 9/19–10/20.

8. "Here is the only contemporary authority for the 'Landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock' on Monday, 11/21 Dec. 1620. \* \* \* The landing took place from the shallop, not the *Mayflower* \* \* \* Nor is it clear that they landed on \* \* \* Plymouth Rock, [although] it would have been very convenient for that purpose at half tide" [Morison's note].

On the 15th of December they weighed anchor to go to the place they had discovered, and came within two leagues of it, but were fain to bear up again; but the 16th day, the wind came fair, and they arrived safe in this harbor. And afterwards took better view of the place, and resolved where to pitch their dwelling; and the 25th day began to erect the first house for common use to receive them and their goods.<sup>9</sup>

## From Of Plymouth Plantation, Book II

[*The Mayflower Compact* (1620)]

I shall a little return back, and begin with a combination made by them before they came ashore; being the first foundation of their government<sup>1</sup> in this place. Occasioned partly by the discontented and mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall from them in the ship: That when they came ashore they would use their own liberty, for none had power to command them, the patent they had being for Virginia and not for New England, which belonged to another government, with which the Virginia Company had nothing to do.<sup>2</sup> And partly that such an act by them done, this their condition considered, might be as firm as any patent, and in some respects more sure.

The form was as followeth:<sup>3</sup>

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN.

We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact,

9. *I.e.*, the *Mayflower* reached Plymouth Harbor on December 16/26, but the Pilgrims did not actually begin to build ashore for nine more days. *Mourt's Relation* shows that the interval was used in exploring for the best possible site.

1. The *Mayflower Compact* is important as an early American covenant instituting civil government by common consent with reference to the common good. Although it was enacted in an emergency, it followed the precedent

of the church covenants already familiar to Puritans, and, as Bradford's words suggest, it was the "first foundation" of direct popular government in America, while feudal forms persisted in Europe.

2. The Pilgrims and the "Adventurers" who sailed with them were alike authorized by patent from the Virginia Company, whose territory extended northward only to Manhattan Island.

3. A text differing from this one only in a few insignificant words was published in *Mourt's Relation* in 1622.



constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620.

After this they chose, or rather confirmed, Mr. John Carver (a man godly and well approved amongst them) their Governor for that year. And after they had provided a place for their goods, or common store (which were long in unlading for want of boats, foulness of the winter weather and sickness of divers\*) and begun some small cottages for their habitation; as time would admit, they met and consulted of laws and orders, both for their civil and military government as the necessity of their condition did require, still adding thereunto as urgent occasion in several times, and as cases did require.

In these hard and difficult beginnings they found some discontents and murmurings arise amongst some, and mutinous speeches and carriages in other; but they were soon quelled and overcome by the wisdom, patience, and just and equal carriage of things, by the Governor and better part, which clave faithfully together in the main.

4. Several; various persons.

## ANNE BRADSTREET

(1612?-1672)

In 1650 a woman poet was a rarity, but Anne Bradstreet's place in literary history is the result not only of her uniqueness but of a genuine if limited inspiration and a force of character which have survived for three hundred years in a few of her poems. This first noteworthy American poet was born in Northampton, England, probably in 1612. Her father, Thomas Dudley, by conviction a sturdy Puritan, had turned from a military career to business; when

Anne was born he was steward of the estates of the Earl of Lincoln, a learned and aristocratic Puritan. Thomas Dudley was himself a man of studious character, and his daughter had the advantages of good tutoring, with access to the Earl's considerable library at Sempringham Castle. She was widely read but not learned, drawn chiefly toward the serious and religious writings of the Puritan world, and very little toward those of that other world, just waning,

in which there still lived at her birth Shakespeare and Cervantes, Ben Jonson and Bacon.

In 1628, at the age of sixteen, she married Simon Bradstreet, a grave and brilliant young Puritan who had been trained at Cambridge and afterward by her father. Two years later, Bradstreet gave up his position as steward of the Countess of Warwick, and with his young wife embarked upon the *Arabella* for America. Dudley and his family also sailed on that ship, which brought the first settlers to the colony at Massachusetts Bay. One of the most active men in the colony, Dudley served four terms as governor. Simon Bradstreet was governor of the colony for ten years; he served also as judge, and represented Massachusetts at the court of Charles II when curtailment of the charter was threatened in 1661.

In spite of the hardships of early colonial life and the duties of her household, Anne Bradstreet seems to have turned resolutely to authorship whenever she had the opportunity. Manuscripts of the poems in her first volume bear dates from 1632 to 1643. Whether she intended publication or not, she wrote a dedicatory poem to her father in 1642. In 1647 her sister's hus-

band, John Woodbridge, pastor of the church of Andover, sailed to England and took her manuscript volume with him. Without her consent he had it published in London, in 1650, with the title, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America. \* \* \* By a Gentlewoman of Those Parts*. About 1666 she revised all her poems for an authorized edition, which was not published until after her death.

The first edition of Anne Bradstreet's writings was *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America \* \* \**, London, 1650, unsigned. The second edition, revised and enlarged by the author, for the first time including the "Contemplations," was posthumously published as *Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning*, Boston, 1678. This was reprinted in 1758. The best edition, with biographical and critical comment, is *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse*, edited by J. H. Ellis, 1867; reprinted 1932. In this edition the prose "Meditations" first appeared. *The Poems of Mrs. Anne Bradstreet, Together with her Prose Remains*, edited by C. E. Norton, 1897, is an accurate text, but does not supersede the Ellis notes. The texts reprinted below are from Ellis' edition, which reproduces those of the 1678 edition. For clarity, the capitalization, spelling, and punctuation have in some cases been normalized, without alteration of the language.

Biographies are Helen S. Campbell, *Anne Bradstreet and Her Time*, 1891; and L. Caldwell, *An Account of Anne Bradstreet*, 1898. Excellent sketches are by Moses C. Tyler, in *A History of American Literature During the Colonial Period*, 1878, revised 1897, 1949; and by Lyon N. Richardson, in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1929.

## The Prologue<sup>1</sup>

### 1

To sing of wars, of captains, and of kings,  
Of cities founded, commonwealths begun,  
For my mean pen are too superior things;

1. Anne Bradstreet apparently intended this poem as a prologue for her lengthy "Quaternions" on the history of mankind and the "four monarchies." In the

1650 edition it stood at the beginning of that work, preceded only by her poem dedicating her poems to her father.

Or how they all, or each, their dates have run;  
Let poets and historians set these forth; 5  
My obscure lines shall not so dim their worth.

2

But when my wond'ring eyes and envious heart  
Great Bartas'<sup>2</sup> sugared lines do but read o'er,  
Fool, I do grudge the muses did not part  
'Twixt him and me that overfluent store. 10  
A Bartas can do what a Bartas will;  
But simple I according to my skill.

3

From schoolboy's tongue no rhet'ric we expect,  
Nor yet a sweet consort from broken strings,  
Nor perfect beauty where's a main defect. 15  
My foolish, broken, blemished Muse so sings;  
And this to mend, alas, no art is able,  
'Cause nature made it so irreparable.

4

Nor can I, like that fluent, sweet-tongued Greek  
Who lisped at first, in future times speak plain. 20  
By art he gladly found what he did seek;  
A full requital of his striving pain.  
Art can do much, but this maxim's most sure:  
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

5

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue  
Who says my hand a needle better fits; 25  
A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong,  
For such despite they cast on female wits.  
If what I do prove well, it won't advance;  
They'll say it's stol'n, or else it was by chance. 30

6

But sure the antique Greeks were far more mild;  
Else of our sex why feignèd they those nine,<sup>3</sup>  
And Poesy made Calliope's own child?  
So 'mongst the rest they placed the arts divine,  
But this weak knot they will full soon untie: 35  
The Greeks did nought but play the fools and lie.

7

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are;  
Men have precedence and still excel.

2. Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas (1544-1590), French writer of religious epics, by whom she was inspired.

3. All nine of the Greek Muses were female deities, each patronizing a different

art. That of Calliope, mentioned in the following line, was the epic, which Mrs. Bradstreet was attempting in her "Quaternions."

## 24 · *Anne Bradstreet*

It is but vain unjustly to wage war;  
Men can do best, and women know it well. 40  
Pre-eminence in all and each is yours;  
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

8

And O ye high-flown quills<sup>4</sup> that soar the skies,  
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,  
If e'er you deign these lowly lines your eyes, 45  
Give thyme or parsley wreath; I ask no bays.  
This mean and unrefined ore of mine  
Will make your glistering gold but more to shine.

1643?

1650

### To My Dear and Loving Husband<sup>5</sup>

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me ye women if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold, 5  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay;  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray. 10  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,  
That when we live no more we may live ever.

1678

### A Letter to Her Husband<sup>1</sup>

Phoebus,<sup>2</sup> make haste, the day's too long, be gone;  
The silent night's the fittest time for moan.  
But stay this once, unto my suit give ear,  
And tell my griefs in either hemisphere;  
And if the whirling of thy wheels don't drown'd 5  
The woful accents of my doleful sound,

4. The quill pen, then in general use.  
5. In the 1678 edition, posthumously published, the anonymous editor included this among "several other poems made by the author upon diverse occasions, \* \* \* found among her papers after her death, which she never meant should come to publick view."

1. First published in the 1678 edition. There it is simply entitled "Another," following a short poem called "A Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Publick Employment." These were among the manuscript poems of an intimate nature which Mrs. Bradstreet had apparently not intended to publish.  
2. The sun.

If in thy swift carrier<sup>3</sup> thou canst make stay,  
 I crave this boon, this errand by the way:  
 Commend me to the man more loved than life,  
 Shew him the sorrows of his widowed wife, 10  
 My dumpish thoughts, my groans, my brakish tears,  
 My sobs, my longing hopes, my doubting fears,  
 And if he love, how can he there abide?  
 My interest's more than all the world beside.  
 He that can tell the stars or ocean sand, 15  
 Or all the grass that in the meads do stand,  
 The leaves in the woods, the hail or drops of rain,  
 Or in a cornfield number every grain,  
 Or every mote that in the sunshine hops,  
 May count my sighs and number all my drops. 20  
 Tell him the countless steps that thou dost trace,  
 That once a day thy spouse thou mayst embrace;  
 And when thou canst not treat by loving mouth,  
 Thy rays afar salute her from the south.  
 But for one month I see no day, poor soul, 25  
 Like those far situate under the pole,  
 Which day by day long wait for thy arise:  
 O how they joy when thou dost light the skys.  
 O Phoebus, hadst thou but thus long from thine  
 Restrained the beams of thy beloved shine, 30  
 At thy return, if so thou could'st or durst,  
 Behold a Chaos blacker than the first.  
 Tell him here's worse than a confused matter—  
 His little world's a fathom under water;  
 Nought but the fervor of his ardent beams 35  
 Hath power to dry the torrent of these streams.  
 Tell him I would say more, but cannot well:  
 Oppressed minds abruptest tales do tell.  
 Now post with double speed, mark what I say;  
 By all our loves conjure him not to stay. 40

1678

### The Author to Her Book<sup>4</sup>

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,  
 Who after birth did'st by my side remain,

3. *I.e.*, "career," or "course."

4. This casual poem is one of Anne Bradstreet's most delightful and genuine. It recounts with humor her feelings at seeing her poems in print in 1650 without her authorization or correction, and her subsequent efforts to improve

them. It appears that she intended this to stand last among her poems when she revised them about 1666 for a proposed second edition. Whoever sent the volume to the printer after her death added a subsequent section of thirteen "Posthumous Poems."

Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true,  
 Who thee abroad exposed to public view;  
 Made thee in rags, halting, to the press to trudge, 5  
 Where errors were not lessened, all may judge.  
 At thy return my blushing was not small,  
 My rambling brat (in print) should mother call;  
 I cast thee by as one unfit for light,  
 Thy visage was so irksome in my sight; 10  
 Yet being mine own, at length affection would  
 Thy blemishes amend, if so I could:  
 I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,  
 And rubbing off a spot, still made a flaw.  
 I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet, 15  
 Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet;  
 In better dress to trim thee was my mind,  
 But nought save homespun cloth, in the house I find.  
 In this array, 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam;  
 In criticks hands beware thou dost not come; 20  
 And take thy way where yet thou are not known.  
 If for thy Father asked, say thou had'st none;  
 And for thy Mother, she alas is poor,  
 Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

1666?

1678

## SAMUEL SEWALL

(1652-1730)

The New England Puritans were closely united by their common faith, but they produced the varied individualism of Bradford, John Eliot, the Mathers, and Jonathan Edwards, among others. Samuel Sewall represents a distinct type of the second and third generations, in which a more secular spirit gradually defeated the waning theocracy. Devoutly religious in private and public life, Sewall resisted an early religious vocation in favor of wealth, public office, and the pursuit of his hobbies. Shortly after his graduation from Harvard in 1671, he married Han-

nah, daughter of John Hull, Master of the Mint and reputed to be the wealthiest person in Massachusetts. His position was soon further strengthened by a small inheritance from his father. Sewall became an early example of the American aristocrat who regards public service as his natural expression. His father, avoiding the consequences of the Restoration of 1660, had brought him at the age of nine to Boston, and he seldom left it afterward. His *Diary*, for which he is best known, is a social history of that city during more than a half century.

Sewall began his public service in his late twenties. He managed the colony's printing press for several years, acting concurrently as deputy of the general court (1683) and later as member of the Council (1684-1686). In England on business in 1688, he assisted Increase Mather, the appointed envoy of the Massachusetts churches, in his unsuccessful efforts to secure the restoration of the charter of the colony. Under the new charter of 1692, Sewall again became a member of the Council, and served for thirty-three years. In the same year, 1692, he achieved his professional objective, being appointed as justice of the Superior Court; and he rose in the judiciary until, from 1718 to 1728, he was chief justice of Massachusetts.

One judicial act above all others is memorable in his life; he was a member of the special court of three which condemned the witches of Salem in 1692. That the blood of these innocents rested heavily on his soul is shown by his public confession of error five years later, and by other acts of contrition recorded in the text of his diary.

Sewall becomes the more interesting, since he represents not only himself but also an epoch. With the rapid influx of new people, the fervid dedication of the Puritan Fathers was doomed. Sewall's *Diary* depicts the result-

ant secularization, and the daily life of the generation that, within his time, first fully expressed those practical traits that came to be called "Yankee." He was shrewdly aware of the value of money, but wished to earn it honestly; he was ambitious for honors, position, and esteem, but affectionate and neighborly; he was of moderate intelligence, often quaintly obtuse, but he had a quick sense of responsibility, the courage to confess his sins and acknowledge God publicly, and the humanitarian inspiration to become the author of perhaps the first tract published against Negro slavery in this country, *The Selling of Joseph* (1700).

The now famous *Diary* was not published until 1878. His first entries were made in 1673, and the record was copiously continued for most of the years through 1729, a total span of fifty-seven years. In spite of occasional lapses, the style bears the interesting stamp of the man himself, at his best when he portrays with a few suggestive strokes the dramatic essentials of a scene, a conversation, or even a gathering of people.

*The Diary of Samuel Sewall* was published in the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vols. V-VII, 1878-1882, the source of the present text. See also *Samuel Sewall's Diary* [abridged], edited by Mark Van Doren, 1927. The latest edition is *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, edited by Milton H. Thomas, 1959.

## *From The Diary of Samuel Sewall*

### [*Customs and Courtships*]

April 29, 1695. The morning is very warm and Sunshiny; in the Afternoon there is Thunder and Lightening, and about 2. P.M. a

very extraordinary Storm of Hail, so that the ground was made white with it, as with the blossoms when fallen; 'twas as bigg as pistoll and Musquet Bullets; It broke of the Glass of the new House about 480 Quarrels<sup>1</sup> of the Front; of Mr. Sergeant's about as much; Col. Shrimpton, Major General, Govr. Bradstreet, New Meetinghouse, Mr. Willard, &c. Mr. Cotton Mather dined with us, and was with me in the new Kitchen when this was; He had just been mentioning that more Ministers Houses than others proportionably had been smitten with Lightning; enquiring what the meaning of God should be in it. Many Hail-Stones broke throw the Glass and flew to the middle of the Room, or farther: People afterward Gazed upon the House to see its Ruins. I got Mr. Mather to pray with us after this awful Providence; He told God He had broken the brittle part of our house, and prayd that we might be ready for the time when our Clay-Tabernacles should be broken. 'Twas a sorrowfull thing to me to see the house so far undon again before twas finish'd.

Jan. 14, 1697. Copy of the Bill I put up on the Fast day;<sup>2</sup> giving it to Mr. Willard as he pass'd by, and standing up at the reading of it, and bowing when finished; in the Afternoon.

Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family; and being sensible, that as to the Guilt contracted upon the opening of the late commission of Oyer and Terminer at Salem (to which the order for this Day relates) he is, upon many accounts, more concerned than any that he knows of, Desires to take the Blame and shame of it, Asking pardon of men, And especially desiring prayers that God, who has an Unlimited Authority, would pardon that sin and all other his sins; personal and Relative: And according to his infinite Benignity, and Sovereignty, Not Visit the sin of him, or of any other, upon himself or any of his, nor upon the Land: But that He would powerfully defend him against all Temptations to Sin, for the future; and vouchsafe him the efficacious, saving Conduct of his Word and Spirit.

Saturday, Feb. 6, 1714. \* \* \* My neighbour Colson knocks at our door about 9. or past to tell of the Disorders at the Tavern<sup>3</sup> at the Southend in Mr. Addington's house, kept by John Wallis. He desired me that I would accompany Mr. Bromfield and Constable Howell thither. It was 35. Minutes past Nine at Night before Mr. Bromfield came; then we went. I took Æneas Salter with me. Found much Company. They refus'd to go away. Said were there to drink the Queen's Health, and they had many other Healths to drink.

1. Squares; panes set diagonally in a window.

2. Devout persons often made public confession of sin by posting acknowledgments in the church. Sewall refers to his activity as a judge in 1692 in the Salem witchcraft trials, which con-

demned nineteen to be hanged and one to be pressed to death, while scores were tortured and publicly disgraced.

3. This event occurred on Queen Anne's birthday, which the worldly would celebrate in a spirited fashion.



Call'd for more Drink: drank to me, I took notice of the Affront to them. Said must and would stay upon that Solemn occasion. Mr. John Netmaker drank the Queen's Health to me. I told him I drank none; upon that he ceas'd. Mr. Brinley put on his Hat to affront me. I made him take it off. I threaten'd to send some of them to prison; that did not move them. They said they could but pay their Fine, and doing that they might stay. I told them if they had not a care, they would be guilty of a Riot. Mr. Bromfield spake of raising a number of Men to Quell them, and was in some heat, ready to run into Street. But I did not like that. Not having Pen and Ink, I went to take their Names with my Pensil, and not knowing how to Spell their Names, they themselves of their own accord writ them. Mr. Netmaker, reproaching the Province, said they had not made one good Law.

At last I address'd myself to Mr. Banister. I told him he had been longest an Inhabitant and Freeholder, I expected he should set a good Example in departing thence. Upon this he invited them to his own House, and away they went; and we, after them, went away. The Clock in the room struck a pretty while before they departed. I went directly home, and found it 25. Minutes past Ten at Night when I entred my own House. \* \* \*

May 26, [1720]. About midnight my dear wife<sup>4</sup> expired to our great astonishment, especially mine. May the Sovereign Lord pardon my Sin, and Sanctify to me this very Extraordinary, awful Dispensation.

May 29, [1720]. God having in his holy Sovereignty put my Wife out of the Fore-Seat, I apprehended I had Cause to be asham'd of my Sin, and to loath my self for it; and retired to my Pue. \* \* \* I put a Note to this purpose: Samuel Sewall, depriv'd of his Wife by a very sudden and awfull Stroke, desires Prayers that God would sanctify the same to himself, and Children, and family. Writ and sent three; to the South, Old, and Mr. Colman's church.

Sept. 5, 1720. Going to Son Sewall's I there meet with Madam Winthrop, told her I was glad to meet her there, had not seen her a great while; gave her Mr. Homes's Sermon.

Sept. 30, 1720. Mr. Colman's Lecture: Daughter Sewall acquaints Madam Winthrop that if she pleas'd to be within at 3. p.m. I would wait on her. She answer'd she would be at home.

Oct. 1, 1720. Saterdag, I dine at Mr. Stoddard's: from thence I went to Madam Winthrop's just at 3. Spake to her, saying, my loving wife died so soon and suddenly, 'twas hardly convenient for me to think of Marrying again; however I came to this Resolution, that I would not make my Court to any person without first Con-

4. In August, 1719, Sewall, then a widower, began to court the widow Abigail Tilly. Two months later, in October,

1719, they were married. However, after seven months, Abigail suddenly died in the night, as the diarist records below.

sulting with her. Had a pleasant discourse about 7 Single persons sitting in the Fore-scat<sup>5</sup> September 29th viz. Madm Rebekah Dudley, Catharine Winthrop, Bridget Usher, Deliverance Legg, Rebekah Loyd, Lydia Colman, Elizabeth Bellingham. She propounded one and another for me; but none would do, said Mrs. Loyd was about her Age.

Oct. 3, 1720. Waited on Madam Winthrop again; 'twas a little while before she came in. Her daughter Noyes being there alone with me, I said, I hoped my Waiting on her Mother would not be disagreeable to her. She answer'd she should not be against that that might be for her Comfort. I Saluted her, and told her I perceiv'd I must shortly wish her a good Time; (her mother had told me, she was with Child, and within a Moneth or two of her Time). By and by in came Mr. Airs, Chaplain of the Castle,<sup>6</sup> and hang'd up his Hat, which I was a little startled at, it seeming as if he was to lodge there. At last Madam Winthrop came too. After a considerable time, I went up to her and said, if it might not be inconvenient I desired to speak with her. She assented, and spake of going into another Room; but Mr. Airs and Mrs. Noyes presently rose up, and went out, leaving us there alone. Then I usher'd in Discourse from the names in the Fore-scat; at last I pray'd that Katharine<sup>7</sup> might be the person assign'd for me. She instantly took it up in the way of Denial, as if she had catch'd at an Opportunity to do it, saying she could not do it before she was asked. Said that was her mind unless she should Change it, which she believed she should not; could not leave her Children. I express'd my Sorrow that she should do it so Speedily, pray'd her Consideration, and ask'd her when I should wait on her agen. She setting no time, I mention'd that day Sennight.<sup>8</sup> Gave her Mr. Willard's Fountain open'd<sup>9</sup> with the little print and verses; saying, I hop'd if we did well read that book, we should meet together hereafter, if we did not now. She took the Book, and put it in her Pocket. Took Leave.

Oct. 11, 1720. I writ a few Lines to Madam Winthrop to this purpose: "Madam, These wait on you with Mr. Mayhew's<sup>3</sup> Sermon, and Account of the state of the Indians on Martha's Vinyard. I thank you for your Unmerited Favours of yesterday; and hope to have the Happiness of Waiting on you to-morrow before Eight a-clock after Noon. I pray God to keep you, and give you a joyfull entrance upon the Two Hundred and twenty ninth year of Christopher Columbus his Discovery; and take Leave, who am, Madam, your humble

5. It was customary for widows to sit in a pew reserved for them at the front of the church.

6. Castle Island, in Boston Harbor, a small fortress with a garrison.

7. Mrs. Winthrop.

8. Seven nights; a week.

9. *The Fountain Opened, or the Great Gospel Privilege of Having Christ Exhibited to Sinful Men* \* \* \*, by Samuel Willard (Boston, 1700).

3. Experience Mayhew was a well-known Puritan evangelist and Indian missionary of Martha's Vineyard.

Servt. S.S.

Oct. 12, 1720. Mrs. Anne Cotton came to door (twas before 8.) said Madam Winthrop was within, directed me into the little Room, where she was full of work behind a Stand; Mrs. Cotton came in and stood. Madam Winthrop pointed to her to set me a Chair. Madam Winthrop's Countenance was much changed from what 'twas on Monday, look'd dark and lowering. At last, the work, (black stuff or Silk) was taken away, I got my Chair in place, had some Converse, but very Cold and indifferent to what 'twas before. Ask'd her to acquit me of Rudeness if I drew off her Glove. Enquiring the reason, I told her twas great odds between handling a dead Goat, and a living Lady. Got it off. I told her I had one Petition to ask of her, that was, that she would take off the Negative she laid on me the third of October; She readily answer'd she could not, and enlarg'd upon it; She told me of it so soon as she could; could not leave her house, children, neighbours, business. I told her she might do som Good to help and support me. Mentioning Mrs. Cookin, Nath, the widow Weld was spoken of; said I had visited Mrs. Denison. I told her Yes! Afterward I said, If after a first and second Vagary she would Accept of me returning, Her Victorious Kindness and Good Will would be very Obliging. She thank'd me for my Book, (Mr. Mayhew's Sermon), But said not a word of the Letter. When she insisted on the Negative, I pray'd there might be no more Thunder and Lightening, I should not sleep all night. I gave her Dr. Preston,<sup>4</sup> The Church's Marriage and the Church's Carriage, which cost me 6s at the Sale. The door standing open, Mr. Airs came in, hung up his Hat, and sat down. After awhile, Madam Winthrop moving, he went out. Jno Eyre look'd in, I said How do ye, or, your servant Mr. Eyre: but heard no word from him. Sarah fill'd a Glass of Wine, she drank to me, I to her, She sent Juno home with me with a good Lantern, I gave her 6d and bid her thank her Mistress. In some of our Discourse, I told her I had rather go to the Stone-House<sup>5</sup> adjoining to her, than to come to her against her mind. Told her the reason why I came every other night was lest I should drink too deep draughts of Pleasure. She had talk'd of Canary, her Kisses were to me better than the best Canary. Explain'd the expression Concerning Columbus. \* \* \*

Oct. 19, 1720. Midweek, Visited Madam Winthrop; Sarah told me she was at Mr. Walley's, would not come home till late. I gave her Hannah 3 oranges with her Duty, not knowing whether I should find her or no. Was ready to go home: but said if I knew she was there, I would go thither. Sarah seem'd to speak with pretty good Courage, She would be there. I went and found her there, with

4. John Preston (1587-1628), English tans.

Puritan of Cambridge University, 5. *I.e.*, the prison.

teacher of many early American Puri-

Mr. Walley and his wife in the little Room below. At 7 a'clock I mentioned going home; at 8. I put on my Coat, and quickly waited on her home. She found occasion to speak loud to the servant, as if she had a mind to be known. Was Courteous to me; but took occasion to speak pretty earnestly about my keeping a Coach: I said 'twould cost £100. per annum: she said twould cost but £40. \* \* \* Exit. Came away somewhat late.

Oct. 20, 1720. \* \* \* Madam Winthrop not being at Lecture, I went thither first; found her very Serene with her dâter<sup>e</sup> Noyes, Mrs. Dering, and the widow Shipreev sitting at a little Table, she in her arm'd Chair. She drank to me, and I to Mrs. Noyes. After awhile pray'd the favour to speak with her. She took one of the Candles, and went into the best Room, clos'd the shutters, sat down upon the Couch. She told me Madam Usher had been there, and said the Coach must be set on Wheels, and not by Rusting. She spake somthing of my needing a Wigg. Ask'd me what her Sister said to me. I told her, She said, If her Sister were for it, She would not hinder it. But I told her, she did not say she would be glad to have me for her Brother. Said, I shall keep you in the Cold, and asked her if she would be with in to morrow night, for we had had but a running Feat. She said she could not tell whether she should, or no. I took Leave. As were drinking at the Governour's, he said: In England the Ladies minded little more than that they might have Money, and Coaches to ride in. I said, And New-England brooks its Name. At which Mr. Dudley smiled. Govr said they were not quite so bad here.

Oct. 21, 1720. Friday, My Son, the Minister, came to me p.m. by appointment and we pray one for another in the Old Chamber; more especially respecting my Courtship. About 6. a'clock I go to Madam Winthrop's; Sarah told me her Mistress was gon out, but did not tell me whither she went. She presently order'd me a Fire; so I went in, having Dr. Sibb's Bowels<sup>7</sup> with me to read. I read the two first Sermons, still no body came in: at last about 9. a'clock Mr. Jno Eyre came in; I took the opportunity to say to him as I had done to Mrs. Noyes before, that I hoped my Visiting his Mother would not be disagreeable to him; He answered me with much Respect. When twas after 9. a'clock He of himself said he would go and call her, she was but at one of his Brothers: A while after I heard Madam Winthrop's voice, enquiring something about John. After a good while and Clapping the Garden door twice or thrice, she came in. I mentioned something of the lateness; she banter'd me, and said I was later. She recciv'd me Courteously. I ask'd when our proceed-

6. Daughter.

7. Dr. Richard Sibbes, prominent English Puritan, published in 1639 his *Bowels Opened; or a discovery of the*

*Neere and deere Love, Union and communion between Christ and the Church.* Here again "bowels" denotes a supposed inner organ of compassion.

ings should be made publick: She said They were like to be no more publick than they were already. Offer'd me no Wine that I remember. I rose up at 11 a-clock to come away, saying I would put on my Coat, She offer'd not to help me. I pray'd her that Juno might light me home, she open'd the Shutter, and said twas pretty light abroad; Juno was weary and gon to bed. So I came hòm by Star-light as well as I could. At my first coming in, I gave Sarah five Shillings. I writ Mr. Eyre his Name in his book with the date Octobr 21. 1720. It cost me 8s. Jehovah jireh!<sup>8</sup> Madam told me she had visited M. Mico, Wendell, and Wm Clark of the South [Church].

Oct. 22, 1720. Dâter Cooper visited me before my going out of Town, staid till about Sun set. I brought her going near as far as the Orange Tree.<sup>9</sup> Coming back, near Leg's Corner, Little David Jeffries saw me, and looking upon me very lovingly, ask'd me if I was going to see his Grandmother?<sup>1</sup> I said, Not to-night. Gave him a peny, and bid him present my Service to his Grandmother.

Oct. 24, 1720. I went in the Hackny Coach through the Common, stop'd at Madam Winthrop's (had told her I would take my departure from thence). Sarah came to the door with Katee in her Arms: but I did not think to take notice of the Child. Call'd her Mistress. I told her, being encourag'd by David Jeffries loving eyes, and sweet Words, I was come to enquire whether she could find in her heart to leave that House and Neighbourhood, and go and dwell with me at the Southend: I think she said softly, Not yet. I told her It did not ly in my Lands<sup>2</sup> to keep a Coach. If I should, I should be in danger to be brought to keep company with her Neighbour Brooker, (he was a little before sent to prison for Debt). Told her I had an Antipathy against those who would pretend to give themselves; but nothing of their Estate. I would a proportion of my Estate with my self. And I suppos'd she would do so. As to a Perriwig, My best and greatest Friend, I could not possibly have a greater, began to find me with Hair before I was born, and had continued to do so ever since; and I could not find in my heart to go to another. She commended the book I gave her, Dr. Preston, the Church Marriage; quoted him saying 'twas inconvenient keeping out of a Fashion commonly used. I said the Time and Tide did circumscribe my Visit. She gave me a Dram of Black-Cherry Brandy, and gave me a lump of the Sugar that was in it. She wish'd me a good Journy. I pray'd God to keep her, and came away. Had a very pleasant Journy to Salem.

Nov. 2, 1720. Midweek, went again, and found Mrs. Alden there,

8. God will provide. See Genesis xxii:  
14. These were Abraham's words when  
God provided him with a ram to use for  
the sacrifice instead of his son, Isaac.  
9. That is, "I accompanied her nearly to

the Orange Tree" (an inn on the road).  
1. Madam Winthrop.  
2. *I.e.*, "It did not accord with my income."

who quickly went out. Gave her about  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of Sugar Almonds, cost 3s per £. Carried them on Monday. She seem'd pleas'd with them, ask'd what they cost. Spake of giving her a Hundred pounds per anum if I dy'd before her. Ask'd her what sum she would give me, if she should dy first? Said I would give her time to Consider of it. She said she heard as if I had given all to my Children by Deeds of Gift. I told her 'twas a mistake, Point-Judith was mine &c. That in England, I own'd, my Father's desire was that it should go to my eldest Son; 'twas 20£ per anum; she thought 'twas forty. I think when I seem'd to excuse pressing this, she seem'd to think twas best to speak of it; a long winter was coming on. Gave me a Glass or two of Canary.

Nov. 4, 1720. Friday, Went again about 7. a-clock; found there Mr. John Walley and his wife: sat discoursing pleasantly. I shew'd them Isaac Moses's [an Indian] Writing. Madam W. serv'd Comfeits to us. After awhile a Table was spread, and Supper was set. I urg'd Mr. Walley to Crave a Blessing; but he put it upon me. About 9. they went away. I ask'd Madam what fashioned Neck-lace I should present her with, She said, None at all. I ask'd her Whereabout we left off last time; mention'd what I had offer'd to give her; Ask'd her what she would give me; She said she could not Change her Condition: She had said so from the beginning; could not be so far from her Children, the Lecture. Quoted the Apostle Paul affirming that a single Life was better than a Married. I answer'd That was for the present Distress. Said she had not pleasure in things of that nature as formerly: I said, you are the fitter to make me a Wife. If she hald in that mind, I must go home and bewail my Rashness in making more haste than good Speed. However, considering the Supper, I desired her to be within next Monday night, if we liv'd so long. Assented. \* \* \*

Nov. 7, 1720. My Son pray'd in the Old Chamber. Our time had been taken up by Son and Daughter Cooper's Visit; so that I only read the 130th and 143 Psalm. Twas on the Account of my Courtship. I went to Mad. Winthrop; found her rocking her little Katee in the Cradle. I excus'd my Coming so late (near Eight). She set me an arm'd Chair and Cusheon; and so the Cradle was between her arm'd Chair and mine. Gave her the remnant of my Almonds; She did not eat of them as before; but laid them away; I said I came to enquire whether she had alter'd her mind since Friday, or remained of the same mind still. She said, Thereabouts. I told her I loved her, and was so fond as to think that she loved me: She said had a great respect for me. I told her, I had made her an offer, without asking any advice; she had so many to advise with, that twas a hindrance. The Fire was come to one short Brand besides the Block, which Brand was set up in end; at last it fell to pieces, and no Recruit

was made: She gave me a Glass of Wine. I think I repeated again that I would go home and bewail my Rashness in making more haste than good Speed. I would endeavour to contain myself, and not go on to sollicit her to do that which she could not Consent to. Took leave of her. As came down the steps she bid me have a Care. Treated me Courteously. Told her she had enter'd the 4th year of her Widowhood. I had given her the News-Letter before; I did not bid her draw off her Glove as sometime I had done. Her Dress was not so clean as sometime it had been. Jehovah jireh!<sup>3</sup>

1673-1729

1878

3. Again, "God will provide"; and although Sewall acknowledged defeat with Mrs. Winthrop, he achieved a

third marriage sixteen months later, in his seventy-first year.

## EDWARD TAYLOR

(1645?-1729)

During the lifetime of Edward Taylor only a few friends read his poems, which remained in manuscript. The quiet country pastor tended his flock at Westfield, then a frontier village, in the Connecticut valley, and regarded his poems as sacramental acts of private devotion and worship. Ezra Stiles, the poet's grandson, inherited the manuscript, along with Taylor's command "that his heirs should never publish" it; he therefore deposited it in the library at Yale College, of which he was the president. More than two centuries passed before it was discovered, and by that time little could be learned of the man besides what appears in the poetry.

The poetry alone is sufficient to establish him as a writer of a genuine power unequalled by any American poet until Bryant appeared, 150 years later. "A man of small stature but firm: of quick Passions—yet serious and

grave," wrote his grandson Ezra Stiles; and Samuel Sewall remembered a sermon he had preached at the Old South Church in Boston, which "might have been preached at Paul's Cross." This poet was clearly a man of great spiritual passion, of large and liberal learning, enraptured by the Puritan dream to such a degree that he could express it in living song. His success was by no means invariable, but his best poems, a considerable number, justify the position that he at once attained in our literature when in 1939 Thomas H. Johnson published from manuscript a generous selection.

Taylor was born in Coventry, England, or nearby, probably in 1645, and most likely in a family of dissenters. Johnson points out that an ardent young Congregationalist was not then welcome at the British universities, and concludes that the persecutions of 1662 confirmed Taylor's

resolution to emigrate. He taught school for a few years, but finally, in July, 1668, he arrived in Boston, seeking liberty and education. He carried letters to Increase Mather, already a prominent clergyman, and to John Hull, the Master of the Mint, the leading capitalist of the colony, and father of Sewall's first wife. The earnest young seeker captured the affections of his hosts—the Mathers became his intimates for life—and in a few days it was arranged for him to be off for Harvard, where he and Samuel Mather, a nephew of Increase, were classmates. He and Sewall were still closer—"Chamber-fellows and Bed-fellows," as the latter records, adding that "he \* \* \* drew me thither." Quite certainly young Taylor captivated everyone, although his college life was otherwise uneventful, save for some academic distinctions.

Upon graduation in 1671 he accepted a call from the congregation of Westfield, and spent the remaining fifty-eight years of his life in quiet usefulness as pastor to his Congregational flock. He married twice and became the father of thirteen children, most of whom he outlived. In 1720 Harvard conferred on him the degree of Master of Arts. Taylor died in 1729, "entirely enfeebled \* \* \* longing and waiting for his Dismission."

Taylor's manuscript book is in several sections: "God's Deter-

minations," which includes "The Preface" and "The Glory of and Grace in the Church Set Out"; "Five Poems," the source of "Huswifery" and "Upon a Spider \* \* \*"; and the "Sacramental Meditations," in two series, from the first of which are drawn the remaining poems included in this volume. Never a servile imitator, Taylor was quite evidently acquainted with the serious British poetry of his times, especially the metaphysical poets—such as Donne, Crashaw, and Herbert—and the contemporaries of Milton, who published *Paradise Lost* the year before young Taylor set out for America.

Taylor's work was uneven; yet at his best he produced lines and passages of startling vitality, fusing lofty concept and homely detail in the memorable fashion of great poetry. He was a true mystic whose experience still convinces us, and one of the four or five American Puritans whose writings retain the liveliness of genuine literature.

A judicious selection of Edward Taylor's poems, along with an authoritative biographical sketch, a critical introduction, and notes, may be found in Thomas H. Johnson's edition of *The Poetical Works of Edward Taylor*, 1939, supplemented in "Some Edward Taylor Gleanings," *New England Quarterly*, XVI (June, 1943), 280-296, and in "The Topical Verses of Edward Taylor," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, XXXIV (1943), 513-554. *The Poems of Edward Taylor*, ed. by Donald E. Stanford, New Haven, 1960, containing useful critical apparatus, is the source for certain revisions of the text below.

## The Preface

Infinity, when all things it beheld  
In Nothing, and of Nothing all did build,



Upon what Base was fixt the Lath,<sup>1</sup> wherein  
 He turn'd this Globe, and riggalld<sup>2</sup> it so trim?  
 Who blew the Bellows of his Furnace Vast? 5  
 Or held the Mould wherein the world was Cast?  
 Who laid its Corner Stone? Or whose Command?  
 Where stand the Pillars upon which it stands?  
 Who Lac'de and Filletted<sup>3</sup> the earth so fine,  
 With Rivers like green Ribbons Smaragdine?<sup>4</sup> 10  
 Who made the Sca's its Selvedge,<sup>5</sup> and it locks  
 Like a Quilt Ball<sup>6</sup> within a Silver Box?  
 Who Sprcad its Canopy? Or Curtains Spun?  
 Who in this Bowling Alley bowld the Sun?  
 Who made it always when it rises set 15  
 To go at once both down, and up to get?  
 Who th' Curtain rods made for this Tapisry?  
 Who hung the twinckling Lanthorns in the Sky?  
 Who? who did this? or who is he? Why, know  
 Its Onely Might Almighty this did doe. 20  
 His hand hath made this noble worke which Stands  
 His Glorious Handywork not made by hands.  
 Who spake all things from nothing; and with ease  
 Can speake all things to nothing, if he please.  
 Whose Little finger at his pleasure Can 25  
 Out mete<sup>7</sup> ten thousand worlds with halfe a Span:  
 Whose Might Almighty can by half a looks<sup>8</sup>  
 Root up the rocks and rock the hills by th' roots.  
 Can take this mighty World up in his hande,  
 And shake it like a Squitchen<sup>9</sup> or a Wand. 30  
 Whose single Frown will make the Heavens shake  
 Like as an aspen leafe the Winde makes quake.  
 Oh! what a might is this Whose single frown  
 Doth shake the world as it would shake it down?  
 Which All from Nothing fet,<sup>1</sup> from Nothing, All: 35  
 Hath All on Nothing set, lets Nothing fall.  
 Gave all to nothing Man indeed, wherby  
 Through nothing man all might him Glorify.  
 In Nothing then imbosst the brightest Gem  
 More pretious than all pretiousness in them. 40

1. Lath.

2. To make a groove for. Cf. archaic "regal" or "riggal," a groove or slot for a moving mechanical member.

3. A filet was a lace mesh often used in binding women's hair.

4. Emerald green, from the Latin *smaragdus*, "emerald."

5. The woven or finished edge of a fabric.

6. A ball with a cover quilted of small

patches of contrasting colors, used as a toy or trinket.

7. Measure out.

8. *half a looks*: So reads the original manuscript in the Yale University Library.

9. "Possibly \* \* \* the obsolete substantive *switching*, a switch or stick" [Johnson's note].

1. Fetched.

But Nothing man did throw down all by Sin:  
 And darkened<sup>2</sup> that lightsom Gem in him.  
 That now his Brightest Diamond is grown  
 Darker by far than any Coalpit Stone.

1682

1939

## Meditation One

What Love is this of thine, that Cannot bee  
 In thine Infinity, O Lord, Confinde,  
 Unless it in thy very Person see,  
 Infinity, and Finity Conjoyn'd?  
 What hath thy Godhead, as not satisfide  
 Marri'de our Manhood, making it its Bride?

5

Oh, Matchless Love! Filling Heaven to the brim!  
 O're running it: all running o're beside  
 'This World! Nay Overflowing Hell; wherein  
 For thine Fleet, there rose a mighty Tide!  
 That there our Veans might through thy Person bleed,  
 To quench those flames, that else would on us feed.

10

Oh! that thy Love might overflow my Heart!  
 To fire the same with Love: for Love I would.  
 But oh! my streight'ned<sup>3</sup> Breast! my Lifeless Sparkle!  
 My Fireless Flame! What Chilly Love, and Cold?  
 In measure small! In Manner Chilly! See.  
 Lord, blow the Coal: Thy Love Enflame in mee.

15

1682

1937

## Huswifery

Make me, O Lord, thy Spin[n]ing Wheele compleate.  
 Thy Holy Worde my Distaff make for mee.  
 Make mine Affections thy Swift Flyers neate  
 And make my Soule thy holy Spoole to bec.  
 My Conversation make to be thy Reelee<sup>5</sup>  
 And reele the yarn thereon spun of thy Wheele.

5

Make me thy Loom then, knit therein this Twine:  
 And make thy Holy Spirit, Lord, winde quills:<sup>6</sup>

2. Read "darkenèd."

3. *I.e.*, straightened, here meaning "constricted."5. Among the parts of a spinning wheel, the *distaff* holds the raw wool or flax,the *flyers* regulate the spinning, the *spool* twists the yarn, and the *reel* receives the finished thread.

6. The spools of a loom.

Then weave the Web thyselfe. The yarn is fine.  
 Thine Ordinances make my Fulling Mills.<sup>7</sup> 10  
 Then dy the same in Heavenly Colours Choice,  
 All pinkt<sup>8</sup> with varnisht<sup>9</sup> Flowers of Paradise.

Then cloath therewith mine Understanding, Will,  
 Affections, Judgment, Conscience, Memory  
 My Words, and Actions, that their shine may fill 15  
 My ways with glory and thee glorify.  
 Then mine apparell shall display before yee  
 That I am Cloathd in Holy robes for glory.

1685?

1937

## Meditation Eight

John VI: 51. I am the living bread.<sup>1</sup>

I ken[n]ing<sup>2</sup> through Astronomy Divine  
 The Worlds bright Battlement, wherein I spy  
 A Golden Path my Pensill cannot line,  
 From that bright Throne unto my Threshold ly.  
 And while my puzzled thoughts about it pore, 5  
 I finde the Bread of Life in't at my doore.

When that this Bird of Paradise put in  
 The Wicker Cage (my Corps) to tweedle<sup>3</sup> praise  
 Had peckt the Fruite forbad: and so did fling  
 Away its Food; and lost its golden dayes; 10  
 It fell into Celestiall Famine sore:  
 And never could attain a morsell more.

Alas! alas! Poore Bird, what wilt thou doe?  
 The Creatures field no food for Souls c're gave.  
 And if thou knock at Angells dores they show 15  
 An Empty Barrell: they no soul bread have.  
 Alas! Poore Bird, the Worlds White Loafe is done.  
 And cannot yield thee here the smallest Crumb.

In this sad state, Gods Tender Bowells<sup>4</sup> run  
 Out streams of Grace: and he to end all strife 20

7. Mills in which the cloth is cleansed with fuller's earth or soap.

8. *I.e.*, pinked, meaning "ornamented."

9. Here meaning "lustrous," "glossy."

1. In ll. 21-36 the poet elaborates the passage: "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever," in support of the doctrine of grace, the

New Covenant between God and Adam's fallen children, confirmed by the gift of Christ, His son.

2. Recognizing, knowing.

3. *I.e.*, twiddle, here signifying "warble," in reference to the bird of paradise, his soul.

4. Here referring to a supposed inward center of compassion.

The Purest Wheate in Heaven, his deare-dear Son  
 Grinds, and kneads up into this Bread of Life.  
 Which Bread of Life from Heaven down came and stands  
 Disht on thy Table up by Angells Hands.

Did God mould up this Bread in Heaven, and bake, 25  
 Which from his Table came, and to thine goeth?  
 Doth he bespake thee thus, 'This Soule Bread take.  
 Come Eat thy fill of this thy Gods White Loafe?  
 Its Food too fine for Angells, yet come, take  
 And Eat thy fill. Its Heavens Sugar Cake. 30

What Grace is this knead in this Loafe? This thing  
 Souls are but petty things it to admire.  
 Yee Angells, help: This fill would to the brim  
 Heav'ns whelm'd-down Chrystall meelee Bowle, yea and higher.  
 This Bread of Life dropt in thy mouth, doth Cry. 35  
 Eate, Eate me, Soul, and thou shalt never dy.

1684

1937

### The Glory of and Grace in the Church set out

Come now behold  
 Within this Knot<sup>5</sup> What Flowers do grow:  
 Spanglde like gold:  
 Whence Wreaths of all Perfumes do flow.  
 Most Curious<sup>6</sup> Colours of all sorts you shall 5  
 With all Sweet Spirits<sup>7</sup> s[c]ent. Yet thats not all.

Oh! Look, and finde  
 These Choicest Flowers most richly sweet  
 Are Discipline  
 With Artificiall Angells meet.<sup>8</sup> 10  
 An heap of Pearls is precious: but they shall  
 When set by Art Excell: Yet that's not all.

Christ's Spirit showers  
 Down in his Word, and Sacraments  
 Upon these Flowers 15  
 The Clouds of Grace Divine Contents.  
 Such things of Wealthy Blessings on them fall  
 As make them sweetly thrive: Yet that's not all.

5. Clump.

6. Amazing.

7. Essences; perfumes.

8. Discipline \* \* \* meet:  
suitably by angel artificers.

Taught

Yet Still behold!  
 All flourish not at once. We see 20  
 While some Unfold  
 Their blushing Leaves, some buds there bee.  
 Here's Faith, Hope, Charity in flower, which call  
 On yonders in the Bud. Yet that's not all.

But as they stand 25  
 Like Beauties reeking<sup>9</sup> in perfume  
 A Divine Hand  
 Doth hand them up to Glories room:  
 Where Each in sweet'ned Songs all Praises shall  
 Sing all ore Heaven for aye. And that's but all. 30

1682

1939

### Upon a Spider Catching a Fly

Thou sorrow, venom Elfe:  
 Is this thy play,  
 To spin a web out of thyselfe  
 To Catch a Fly?  
 For Why? 5

I saw a pettish<sup>1</sup> wasp  
 Fall foule therein.  
 Whom yet thy whorle<sup>2</sup> pins did not clasp  
 Lest he should fling  
 His sting. 10

But as affraid, remote  
 Didst stand hereat  
 And with thy little fingers stroke  
 And gently tap  
 His back. 15

Thus gently him didst treate  
 Lest he should pet,  
 And in a froppish,<sup>3</sup> waspish heate  
 Should greatly fret  
 Thy net. 20

9. Cf. "reeking"; an obsolete meaning was "to emit sweet odors."

1. Peevish, ill-humored. Cf. "pet," l. 17.

2. The whorl, or small flywheel of the

spindle, whose "pins" secure the spinning thread, as the whirling legs of the spider enmesh his victim.

3. Fretful.

Whereas the silly Fly,  
 Caught by its leg  
 Thou by the throate tookst hastily,  
 And 'hinde the head  
 Bite Dead. 25

This goes to pot, that not  
 Nature doth call.<sup>4</sup>  
 Strive not above what strength hath got  
 Lest in the brawle  
 Thou fall. 30

This Frey<sup>5</sup> seems thus to us.  
 Hells Spider gets  
 His intrails spun to whip Cords<sup>6</sup> thus  
 And wove to nets  
 And sets. 35

To tangle Adams race  
 In's stratigems  
 To their Destructions, spoil'd, made base  
 By venom things  
 Damn'd Sins. 40

But mighty, Gracious Lord  
 Communicate  
 Thy Grace to breake the Cord, afford  
 Us Glorys Gate  
 And State. 45

We'l Nightingale sing like  
 When peacht on high  
 In Glories Cage, thy glory, bright,  
 [Yea,] thankfully,  
 For joy. 50

1685?

1939

4. *that not* / *Nature doth call*: *I.e.*, he "goes to pot" who does not call upon "Natural Reason," which, in the Puritan Covenant theology, was man's inherent endowment of capacity to know

God's Truth.

5. *I.e.*, fray, or affray, here meaning "attack."

6. Tough cord, now of hemp, formerly of animal entrails, like catgut.

## JONATHAN EDWARDS

(1703-1758)

Jonathan Edwards, the last and most gifted defender of New England Calvinism, was in several respects the most remarkable American Puritan. Later even than Cotton Mather he attempted to revive the Puritan idealism in a new age of science, secularism, and mercantile activity. Where Mather militantly supported an institutional hierarchy, Edwards relied on spiritual insight; where Mather was aggressive and pedantic, Edwards possessed a profound learning supported by genuine mystical experience and the persuasive gifts of the logician. Unlike Mather, Edwards saw the fruits of his evangelism in the temporary revival of Puritan orthodoxy, but within sixteen years his own congregation had repudiated him. He was in all things too late born. If as a result he was at once identified with the past, he has at least held his position in history.

Edwards was born in 1703, in East Windsor, Connecticut. In childhood he wrote serious works, including a logical refutation of materialism and a pioneer study of the behavior of spiders. At thirteen he was enrolled at Yale. About 1717, before any other American thinker, he discovered, in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, a new empiricism, a theory of knowledge, and a psychology which he later used in support of such Calvinistic doctrines as predestination and the sovereignty

of God, doctrines which, as *Personal Narrative* reveals, he had accepted for himself only after much soul-searching.

They became his foundation stone of faith during his ministry at Northampton, Massachusetts, where he was pastor from 1726 to 1750; they are equally fundamental to the fifteen books that he published, principally from Northampton. The "Great Awakening" of religious faith began there with his preaching, and spread in a wave of evangelism through the middle colonies, ironically producing, in a few years, organized schisms from Congregational and Presbyterian orthodoxy. This schismatic tendency was reflected in his own congregation after 1744. While his influence was being carried abroad by his writings, Edwards was confronted at home with a growing resistance to his severe orthodoxy, and finally, in 1750, with the decree of exclusion memorialized by his famous *Farewell Sermon* to his congregation.

At Stockbridge, Massachusetts, then a frontier village, he was appointed as pastor and Indian missionary, and there he completed his greatest writings, including *Freedom of the Will* (1754). Elected president of Nassau Hall (Princeton) in 1757, he assumed office in January, 1758, but died within three months as the result of an inoculation against smallpox.

He had gained a position as

our country's first systematic philosopher, and earned a permanent place among those who have advanced the thought of the western world. For his use of the empiricism and psychology of Locke was truly an advance, although he employed it to defend a primitive Calvinistic orthodoxy that could not long sustain itself against the rationalistic "enlightenment" of the age of science which had already dawned. Yet no other writer has been so successful in suffusing this grim, Puritan determinism with "a divine and supernatural light" (as he said), in showing human predestination as the necessary corollary to the beauty of God's majestic sovereignty, in combining cold logic with the warmth of mystical insight. Too much has been made of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in which he held the "rebellious and disorderly" congregation of Enfield over the flaming pit of hell. Even in that sermon, as the notes will show, he was less concerned with God's wrath than His grace, which was freely extended to sinners who repented.

Except in the expression of

mystical experience, and of the joy of nature and thought, Edwards' style tends to be reserved and somewhat tiresomely scrupulous; Perry Miller remarks (in *Jonathan Edwards*), even in controversy "he demolishes at tedious length all possible positions of his opponents, including some that they do not hold \* \* \*, and all the time hardly declares his own." But the beauty of this method is that there is nothing left but his own position, and whatever may be thought of his style, it enabled him, very often, to perform that miracle of metaphysics which he called "seeing the perfect idea of a thing."

Collected editions entitled *The Works of President Edwards* were edited by Edward Williams and Edward Parsons, 8 vols., Leeds, 1806-1811; and (source of this text) the American edition, 8 vols., edited by Samuel Austin, 1808-1809; reprinted, 4 vols., New York, 1843. An adequate selection is *Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections*, edited by Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, 1935. For biography, see Ola E. Winslow's *Jonathan Edwards*, 1940, and Perry Miller's *Jonathan Edwards*, American Men of Letters Series, 1949. A Yale University definitive edition is in progress; general editor, Perry Miller; the following are in print: *The Freedom of the Will*, ed. by Paul Ramsey, 1957; *Religious Affections*, ed. by J. E. Smith, 1959.

## Sarah Pierrepont

They say there is a young lady in ———<sup>1</sup> who is beloved of that Great Being, who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and

1. New Haven, Connecticut. Sarah was only thirteen when Edwards wrote this, about 1723. In 1727 he married Sarah.

and she became a principal inspiration in his life and writing.



that she hardly cares for anything, except to meditate on him—that she expects after a while to be received up where he is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven; being assured that he loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from him always. There she is to dwell with him, and to be ravished with his love and delight forever. Therefore, if you present all the world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it, and is unmindful of any pain or affliction. She has a strange sweetness in her mind, and singular purity in her affections; is most just and conscientious in all her conduct; and you could not persuade her to do any thing wrong or sinful, if you would give her all the world, lest she should offend this Great Being. She is of a wonderful sweetness, calmness and universal benevolence of mind; especially after this Great God has manifested himself to her mind. She will sometimes go about from place to place, singing sweetly; and seems to be always full of joy and pleasure; and no one knows for what. She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have some one invisible always conversing with her.

1723?

1830

### *From Personal Narrative*<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me.<sup>4</sup> But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus convinced, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it; and it put an end to all those cavils and objections. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that

2. Celebrated for "mysticism" and "charm," this classic of religious experience was actually "the apparatus of psychological investigation \* \* \* devoted, not to the defense of emotion against reason, but to a winnowing out of the one pure spiritual emotion from the horde of imitations" (Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 106). Written about 1740-1742, this essay was first pub-

lished in a *Life of Edwards* by Samuel Hopkins (1765).

4. Referring to the Covenant theology of the Puritans, God's first covenant with Adam was eternal life in return for obedience—a covenant of justice. In Adam's fall, mankind forfeited this covenant. The New Covenant revealed through Jesus Christ was one of mercy; no one could earn or deserve God's grace.

day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God's shewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and hardening whom he will.<sup>5</sup> God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have often, since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since had not only a conviction, but a delightful conviction. The doctrine has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet.

Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God. But my first conviction was not so.

The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. i: 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen.* As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought within myself, how excellent a being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be wrapt up in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him forever! I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was any thing spiritual, or of a saving nature in this.

From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. And my mind was greatly engaged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ, on the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation by free grace in him. I found no books so delightful to me, as those that treated of these subjects. Those words, Cant.<sup>6</sup> ii: 1, used to be abundantly with me, *I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys.* The words seemed to me, sweetly to represent the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ. The whole book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it, about that time; and found, from time to time, an inward sweetness, that

5. Romans ix: 18. Paul's words were often quoted in support of the doctrine of grace.

6. Canticles, or the Song of Solomon, a love poem interpreted by theologians as applying to Christ and mankind.

would carry me away, in my contemplations. This I know not how to express otherwise, than by a calm, sweet abstraction of soul from all the concerns of this world; and sometimes a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations, of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul, that I know not how to express.

Not long after I began to experience these things, I gave an account to my father of some things that had passed in my mind. I was pretty much affected by the discourse we had together; and when the discourse was ended, I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture for contemplation. And as I was walking there and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious *majesty* and *grace* of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; a high, great, and holy gentleness.

After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time, singing forth, with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. And scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so delightful to me as thunder and lightning; formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunder storm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunder storm; and used to take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself in order to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. While thus engaged, it always seemed natural to me to sing, or chant for my meditations; or, to speak my thoughts in soliloquies with a singing voice.

I felt then great satisfaction, as to my good state; but that did not content me. I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ,

and after more holiness, wherewith my heart seemed to be full, and ready to break; which often brought to my mind the words of the Psalmist, Psal. cxix 28: *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath.* I often felt a mourning and lamenting in my heart, that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. My mind was greatly fixed on divine things; almost perpetually in the contemplation of them. I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year; often walking alone in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer, and converse with God; and it was always my manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent. The delights which I now felt in the things of religion, were of an exceedingly different kind from those before mentioned, that I had when a boy; and what I then had no more notion of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul-animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God; or any taste of the soul-satisfying and life-giving good there is in them.

My sense of divine things seemed gradually to increase, until I went to preach at New York,<sup>7</sup> which was about a year and a half after they began; and while I was there, I felt them, very sensibly, in a higher degree than I had done before. My longings after God and holiness, were much increased. Pure and humble, holy and heavenly Christianity, appeared exceedingly amiable to me. I felt a burning desire to be in every thing a complete Christian; and conform to the blessed image of Christ; and that I might live, in all things, according to the pure and blessed rules of the gospel. I had an eager thirsting after progress in these things; which put me upon pursuing and pressing after them. It was my continual strife day and night, and constant inquiry, how I should *be* more holy, and *live* more holily, and more becoming a child of God, and a disciple of Christ. I now sought an increase of grace and holiness, and a holy life, with much more earnestness, than ever I sought grace before I had it. I used to be continually examining myself, and studying and contriving for likely ways and means, how I should live holily, with far greater diligence and earnestness, than ever I pursued any thing in my life; but yet with too great a dependance on my own strength; which afterwards proved a great damage to me. My experience had not then taught me, as it has done since my extreme feebleness and impotence, every manner of way; and the bottomless depths of secret corruption and deceit there was in my heart. How-

7. August, 1722–May, 1723.

ever, I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness, and conformity to Christ.

The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness; to be with God, and to spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ. My mind was very much taken up with contemplations on heaven, and the enjoyments there; and living there in perfect holiness, humility and love. And it used at that time to appear a great part of the happiness of heaven, that there the saints could express their love to Christ. It appeared to me a great clog and burden, that what I felt within, I could not express as I desired. The inward ardor of my soul, seemed to be hindered and pent up, and could not freely flame out as it would. I used often to think, how in heaven this principle should freely and fully vent and express itself. Heaven appeared exceedingly delightful, as a world of love; and that all happiness consisted in living in pure, humble, heavenly, divine love.

I remember the thoughts I used then to have of holiness; and said sometimes to myself, "I do certainly know that I love holiness, such as the gospel prescribes." It appeared to me, that there was nothing in it but what was ravishingly lovely; the highest beauty and amiableness—a *divine* beauty; far purer than any thing here upon earth; and that every thing else was like mire and defilement, in comparison of it.

Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and rapture to the soul. In other words, that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers; all pleasant, delightful, and undisturbed; enjoying a sweet calm, and the gently vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing as it were in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrant; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun. There was no part of creature holiness, that I had so great a sense of its loveliness, as humility, brokenness of heart and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this, to lie low before God, as in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be ALL, that I might become as a little child.<sup>8</sup>

8. This is the first climax of *Personal Narrative*, a theological case history of divine grace. In the Calvinistic theology, grace functioned through the stages of "regeneration"—after conviction of sin, repentance, and humiliation, man ar-

rives at the stage of "justification"; he is relieved, not of original sin, but of its consequences. In the passages above, Edwards has been testing the psychological reality of his experience of "justification." Cf. Mark x: 15.

While at New York, I was sometimes much affected with reflections on my past life, considering how late it was before I began to be truly religious; and how wickedly I had lived till then; and once so as to weep abundantly, and for a considerable time together.

On *January 12, 1723*. I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down; giving up myself, and all that I had to God; to be for the future in no respect my own; to act as one that had no right to himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed to take God for my whole portion and felicity; looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were; and his law for the constant rule of my obedience; engaging to fight with all my might, against the world, the flesh and the devil, to the end of my life. But I have reason to be infinitely humbled, when I consider how much I have failed of answering my obligation. \* \* \*

I very frequently used to retire into a solitary place, on the banks of Hudson's river, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things, and secret converse with God; and had many sweet hours there. Sometimes Mr. Smith and I walked there together, to converse on the things of God; and our conversation used to turn much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days. I had then, and at other times the greatest delight in the holy scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart, and those sweet and powerful words. I seemed often to see so much light exhibited by every sentence, and such a refreshing food communicated, that I could not get along in reading; often dwelling long on one sentence, to see the wonders contained in it; and yet almost every sentence seemed to be full of wonders. \* \* \*

Since I came to this town,<sup>2</sup> I have often had sweet complacency in God, in views of his glorious perfections and the excellency of Jesus Christ. God has appeared to me a glorious and lovely being, chiefly on the account of his holiness. The holiness of God has always appeared to me the most lovely of all his attributes. The doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty, and free grace, in shewing mercy to whom he would shew mercy; and man's absolute dependance on the operations of God's Holy Spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been much my delight. God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me, a great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore him as a sovereign God, and ask sovereign mercy of him.

I have loved the doctrines of the gospel; they have been to my soul like green pastures. The gospel has seemed to me the richest

2. Northampton, Massachusetts.

treasure; the treasure that I have most desired, and longed that it might dwell richly in me. The way of salvation by Christ has appeared, in a general way, glorious and excellent, most pleasant and most beautiful. It has often seemed to me, that it would in a great measure spoil heaven, to receive it in any other way. That text has often been affecting and delightful to me. Isa. xxxii: 2. *A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, &c.*

It has often appeared to me delightful, to be united to Christ; to have him for my head, and to be a member of his body; also to have Christ for my teacher and prophet. I very often think with sweetness, and longings, and pantings of soul, of being a little child, taking hold of Christ, to be led by him through the wilderness of this world. That text, Matth. xviii: 3, has often been sweet to me, *except ye be converted and become as little children, &c.* I love to think of coming to Christ, to receive salvation of him, poor in spirit, and quite empty of self, humbly exalting him alone; cut off entirely from my own root, in order to grow into, and out of Christ; to have God in Christ to be all in all; and to live by faith on the Son of God, a life of humble unfeigned confidence in him. That scripture has often been sweet to me, Psal. cxv: 1. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.* And those words of Christ, Luke x: 21. *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* That sovereignty of God which Christ rejoiced in, seemed to me worthy of such joy; and that rejoicing seemed to show the excellency of Christ, and of what spirit he was. \* \* \*

Once as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception—which continued as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have, several other times, had views of the same nature \* \* \*

I have greatly longed of late, for a broken heart, and to lie low before God; and, when I ask for humility, I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self-exaltation to me, not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind. Others speak of their longing to be "humbled to the dust"; that may be a proper expression for them, but I always think of myself, that I ought, and it is an expression that has long been natural for me to use in prayer, "to lie infinitely low before God." And it is affecting to think, how ignorant I was, when a young Christian, of the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy and deceit, left in my heart.

I have a much greater sense of my universal, exceeding dependance on God's grace and strength, and mere good pleasure, of late, than I used formerly to have; and have experienced more of an abhorrence of my own righteousness. The very thought of any joy arising in me, on any consideration of my own amiableness, performances, or experiences, or any goodness of heart or life, is nauseous and detestable to me. And yet I am greatly afflicted with a proud and self-righteous spirit, much more sensibly than I used to be formerly. I see that serpent rising and putting forth its head continually, every where, all around me.

Though it seems to me, that, in some respects, I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my first conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure; yet, of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ, as a Mediator revealed in the gospel. On one Saturday night, in particular, I had such a discovery of the excellency of the gospel above all other doctrines, that I could not but say to myself, "This is my chosen light, my chosen doctrine;" and of Christ, "This is my chosen Prophet." It appeared sweet, beyond all expression, to follow Christ, and to be taught, and enlightened, and instructed by him; to learn of him, and live to him. Another Saturday night, (*January, 1739*) I had such a sense, how sweet and blessed a thing it was to walk in the way of duty; to do that which was right and meet to be done, and agreeable to the holy mind of God; that it caused me to break forth into a kind of loud weeping, which held me some time, so that I was forced to shut myself up, and fasten the doors. I could not but, as it were, cry out, "How happy are they which do that which is right in the sight of God! They are blessed indeed, they are the happy ones!" I had, at the same time, a very affecting sense, how meet and suitable it was that God should govern the world, and order all things according to his own pleasure; and I rejoiced in it, that God reigned, and that his will was done.



## Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God<sup>1</sup>

DEUT. XXXII. 35. *Their foot shall slide in due time.*

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, that were God's visible people, and lived under means of grace;<sup>2</sup> and that, notwithstanding all God's wonderful works that he had wrought towards that people, yet remained, as is expressed, ver. 28, void of counsel, having no understanding in them; and that, under all the cultivations of Heaven, brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses next preceeding the text.<sup>3</sup>

The expression that I have chosen for my text, *Their foot shall slide in due time*, seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction that these wicked Israelites were exposed to.

1. That they were *always* exposed to destruction, as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction's coming upon them, being represented by their foot's sliding. The same is expressed,

1. Edwards delivered this sermon on July 8, 1741, at Enfield, Connecticut, at the height of the Great Awakening, a revival of some ten years' duration for which he was largely responsible. The preacher was attempting to bring the members of the congregation to share his understanding of the truth not merely to terrify them with as vivid a glimpse into Hell as the imagination of man has been able to conceive. That he succeeded in this last effect there can be no doubt; in fact, to the modern reader, the sermon may seem an unnecessarily vehement attack on the sober congregation at Enfield. Many of Edwards' listeners were, however, members of the church only by reason of the Half-Way Covenant, a New England revision of Congregationalist doctrine then almost a century old. Church membership had originally been granted to the children of parents who had confessed to a personal experience of conversion; the Half-Way Covenant extended this provision to the third generation, even though neither they nor their parents had made a confession.

Edwards' real purpose, therefore, was to destroy his listeners' lethargic assumption that once they were members of the visible church they were also quite surely regenerated children of God. For their own salvation, they must recognize their total and inherited depravity and that the "mere good pleasure" of God must determine whether or not they should be saved.

The sermon follows the traditional

three-part pattern: an elucidation of a Biblical text, the Calvinistic doctrine depending upon it, and the application of the text to the contemporary situation. To retain the immediate flavor of the discourse and to hold the text as faithfully as possible to the first edition, here printed from a photographic facsimile of a 1741 copy, archaic words and spellings have been retained unless confusion would result. We have reduced capital letters when the modern reader's attention might be distracted by the affection of the eighteenth century for the flourishing upper case. Since this is oral literature, we have avoided any changes in punctuation which would alter the rhetoric and eloquence.

2. In Calvinistic doctrine as formulated in the Westminster Confession, the "means of grace" are supplied by the ordinances, which "are the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper." Edwards is here drawing a parallel between his own people and the Israelites, both "God's visible people": the Israelites' "means of grace" were embodied in the Ten Commandments.

3. Much of this chapter of Deuteronomy is a song sung by Moses to the Israelites, exhorting them to repent and prepare for the promised land after they had fallen into the ways of transgression that culminated in the worship of the golden calf.

Psal. lxxiii. 18. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction.*

2. It implies that they were always exposed to *sudden* unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall; he can't foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once, without warning. Which is also expressed in that, Psal. lxxiii. 18, 19. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment?*

3. Another thing implied is that they are liable to fall of *themselves*, without being thrown down by the hand of another. As he that stands or walks on slippery ground, needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already, and don't fall now, is only that God's appointed time is not come. For it is said, that when that due time, or appointed time comes, *their foot shall slide*. Then they shall be left to fall as they are inclined by their own weight. God won't hold them up in these slippery places any longer, but will let them go; and then, at that very instant, they shall fall into destruction; as he that stands in such slippery declining ground on the edge of a pit that he can't stand alone, when he is let go he immediately falls and is lost.

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this,

*There is nothing that keeps wicked men, at any one moment, out of Hell, but the mere pleasure of God.*

By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.<sup>4</sup>

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations.

1. There is no want of *power* in God to cast wicked men into Hell at any moment. Men's hands can't be strong when God rises up: the strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.

He is not only able to cast wicked men into Hell, but he can most *easily* do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel, that has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any de-

4. It is implicit in the doctrine of unconditional election that God is sovereign and under no obligation to

rescue unregenerate man who has disobeyed God's commands.

fence from the power of God. Tho' hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces: they are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so 'tis easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by; thus easy is it for God when he pleases to cast his enemies down to Hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They *deserve* to be cast into Hell; so that divine Justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine Justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground*, Luke xiii. 7. The sword of divine Justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and 'tis nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are *already* under a sentence of condemnation to Hell. They don't only justly deserve to be cast down thither; but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to Hell. John iii. 18. *He that believeth not is condemned already*. So that every unconverted man properly belongs to Hell; that is his place; from thence he is. John viii. 23. *Ye are from beneath*. And thither he is bound; 'tis the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law assigns to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very *same* anger and wrath of God that is expressed in the torments of Hell: and the reason why they don't go down to Hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them; as angry as he is with many of those miserable creatures that he is now tormenting in Hell, and do there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth, yea doubtless with many that are now in this congregation, that it may be are at ease and quiet, than he is with many of those that are now in the flames of Hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and don't resent it, that he don't let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such an one as themselves, tho' they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation don't slumber, the pit is prepared, the fire is

made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them, the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened her mouth under them.

5. The *Devil* stands ready to fall upon them and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his *goods*, Luke xi. 21. The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back; if God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old Serpent is gaping for them; Hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish *principles* reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a foundation for the torments of Hell: there are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, and exceeding violent in their nature, and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments in 'em as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea, Isai. lvii. 20. For the present God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further*; but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all afore it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is a thing that is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whenas if it were let loose it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no *visible means of death* at hand. 'Tis no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he don't see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident,

and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages, shews that this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step won't be into another world. The unseen, unthought of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of Hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they won't bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight can't discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending 'em to Hell, that there is nothing to make it appear that God had need to be at the expence of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his Providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so universally absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it don't depend at all less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to Hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's *prudence* and *care* to preserve their own *lives*, or the care of others to preserve them, don't secure 'em a moment. This divine Providence and universal experience does also bear testimony to. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; that if it were otherwise we should see some difference between the wise and politick men of the world, and others, with regard to the liableness to early and unexpected death; but how is it in fact? Eccles. ii. 16. *How dieth the wise man? as the fool.*

9. All wicked men's *pains* and *contrivance* they use to escape *Hell*, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, don't secure 'em from Hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of Hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes won't fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the bigger part of men that have died heretofore are gone to Hell; but each one imagines that he lays out matters better for his own escape than others have done: he don't intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take care that shall be effectual, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men do miserably delude them-

selves in their own schemes, and in their confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The bigger part of those that heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to Hell: and it was not because they were not as wise as those that are now alive: it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If it were so, that we could come to speak with them, and could inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected when alive, and when they used to hear about Hell, ever to be the subjects of that misery, we doubtless should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here; I had laid out matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself; I thought my scheme good; I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpected; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief; death outwitted me; God's wrath was too quick for me; O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter, and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God has laid himself under *no obligation* by any promise to keep any natural man out of Hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the Covenant of Grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the Covenant of Grace<sup>5</sup> that are not the children of the Covenant, and that don't believe in any of the promises of the Covenant, and have no interest in the *Mediator* of the Covenant.

So that whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, 'tis plain and manifest that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a *moment* from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is, that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of Hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in Hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold 'em up one mo-

5. The new covenant, made by God after the fall of Adam, whereby he offered salvation and eternal life after

physical death to those who accepted the atonement of Christ.

ment; the Devil is waiting for them, Hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of, all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

APPLICATION

The use may be of *awakening* to unconverted persons in this congregation.<sup>6</sup> Thus that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone is extended abroad under you. *There* is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is Hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of: there is nothing between you and Hell but the air; 'tis only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but don't see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards Hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of Hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not that so is the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun don't willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth don't willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air don't willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with, and don't willingly subserve to any other purpose, and

6. Cf. note 1, with reference to the Half-Way Covenant.

groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spue you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God for the present stays his rough wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given, and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. 'Tis true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are continually rising and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward; if God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in Hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus are all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the spirit of God upon your souls; all that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, (however you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, and may be strict in it,) you are thus in the hands of an angry God; 'tis nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.



However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them, when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, *peace and safety*: Now they see, that those things that they depended on for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes as the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet 'tis nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment: 'tis to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to Hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep: and there is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into Hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up: there is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to Hell since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship: yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you don't this very moment drop down into Hell.

O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: 'tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in Hell: you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

And consider here more particularly several things concerning that wrath that you are in such danger of.

1. *Whose wrath it is*: it is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, tho' it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, that have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their

power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. xx. 2. *The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul.* The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments, that human art can invent or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth: it is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth before God are as grasshoppers, they are nothing and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of Kings is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. Luke xii. 4, 5. *And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea I say unto you, fear him.*

2. 'Tis the *fierceness* of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the *fury* of God; as in Isai. lix. 18. *According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries.* So Isai. lxvi. 15. *For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire.* And so in many other places. So we read of God's fierceness. Rev. xix. 15. There we read of *the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.* The words are exceeding terrible: if it had only been said, *the wrath of God*, the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but 'tis not only said so, but *the fierceness and wrath of God*: the *fury* of God! the *fierceness* of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is not only said so, but *the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.* As tho' there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power, in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as tho' omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then what will be the consequence! What will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong? and whose heart endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that are here present, that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies that he will inflict wrath without any pity: when God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment

to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed and sinks down, as it were into an infinite gloom, he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the executions of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind; he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much, in any other sense than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires: nothing shall be withheld, because it's so hard for you to bear. Ezek. viii. 18. *Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and tho' they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them.* Now God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy: but when once the day of mercy is past, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God as to any regard to your welfare; God will have no other use to put you to but only to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end; for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel but only to be filled full of wrath: God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that 'tis said he will only *laugh and mock*, Prov. i. 25, 26, etc.

How awful are those words, Isai. lxiii. 3, which are the words of the great God, *I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.* 'Tis perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, *viz.* contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or shewing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that he'll only tread you under foot: and tho' he will know that you can't bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he won't regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he'll crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict to that end, that he might *shew* what that *wrath* of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to shew to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to shew how terrible *their* wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that provoke

'em. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to shew *his* wrath, when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning fiery furnace should be het seven times hotter than it was before;<sup>7</sup> doubtless it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it: But the great God is also willing to shew *his* wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. Rom. ix. 22. *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?* And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, to shew how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass, that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner; and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold that awful majesty, and mighty power that is to be seen in it. Isai. xxxiii. 12, 13, 14. *And the people shall be as the burning of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are far off what I have done; and ye that are near acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites, etc.*

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty and terribleness of the omnipotent God shall be magnified upon you, in the ineffable strength of your torments: you shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb;<sup>8</sup> and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of Heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is, and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. Isai. lxvi. 23, 24. *And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord; and they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

4. 'Tis *everlasting* wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity: there will be no end to this exquisite hor-

7. Daniel iii: 19-30.

8. Christ in his priestly office, having

sacrificed himself for sinners (cf. John i: 29).

rible misery: when you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble faint representation of it; 'tis inexpressible and inconceivable: for *who knows the power of God's anger?*

How dreadful is the state of those that are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath, and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul in this congregation, that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious they may otherwise be. Oh that you would consider it, whether you be young or old. There is reason to think, that there are many in this congregation now hearing this discourse, that will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or in what seats they sit, or what thoughts they now have: it may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, in the whole congregation that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might all the rest of the congregation lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember this discourse in Hell? And it would be a wonder if some that are now present, should not be in Hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some person that now sits here in some seat of this meeting-house in health, and quiet and secure, should be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you that finally continue in a natural condition, that shall keep out of Hell longest, will be there in a little time! Your damnation don't slumber; it will come swiftly, and in all probability very suddenly upon many of you. You have reason to wonder, that you are not already in Hell. 'Tis doubtless the case of some that heretofore you have seen and known, that never deserved Hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you: their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect

despair; but here you are in the land of the living, and in the house of God, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned, helpless souls give for one day's such opportunity as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has flung the door of mercy wide open, and stands in the door calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are in now an happy state, with their hearts filled with love to Him that has loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of the people at Suffield,<sup>9</sup> where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Are there not many here that have lived *long* in the world, that are not to this day born again, and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? Oh sirs, your case in an especial manner is extremely dangerous; your guilt and hardness of heart is extremely great. Don't you see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the present remarkable and wonderful dispensation of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and wake thoroughly out of sleep; you cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.

And you that are *young men*, and *young women*, will you neglect this precious season that you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an extraordinary opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as it is with those persons that spent away all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.

And you *children* that are unconverted, don't you know that you are going down to Hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God that is now angry with you every day, and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the Devil, when so many other children in the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over

9. "The next neighbour town" [Edwards' note].

the pit of Hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, that is a day of such great favour to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls: and never was there so great danger of such persons being given up to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind. God seems now to be hastily gathering in his elect in all parts of the land; and probably the bigger part of adult persons that ever shall be saved, will be brought in now in a little time, and that it will be as it was on that great out-pouring of the Spirit upon the Jews in the Apostles' days,<sup>1</sup> the election will obtain, and the rest will be blinded. If this should be the case with you, you will eternally curse this day, and will curse the day that ever you was born, to see such a season of the pouring out of God's Spirit; and will wish that you had died and gone to Hell before you had seen it. Now undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the ax is in an extraordinary manner laid at the root of the trees, that every tree that brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Therefore let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over great part of this congregation: let every one fly out of Sodom. *Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.*

1741

1. Pentecost, when after Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, was given to the apostles (Acts ii).



# Diarists and Observers

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WILLIAM BYRD

(1674-1744)

William Byrd was born March 28, 1674, at the fall of the James River, in what is now Richmond, Virginia, a city he founded and named. At the age of seven he was sent to England for his education, under the direction of a grandfather. After a brief interval in Holland, where he learned something about the Dutch commercial system, he took up quarters in the Middle Temple, in London, for the study of law. He had already been elected a member of the Royal Society when, at the age of twenty-two, he returned to Virginia. In the tradition of his family, he was elected a member of the House of Burgesses, and he represented the colony on several occasions in England. In 1705, upon his father's death, he returned to Virginia, where he remained for the next ten years. Byrd inherited the family property—some 26,000 acres—and succeeded his father as Receiver-General of Revenues. He progressed from this office to membership in the Supreme Council, which functioned as a sort of Senate for the colony, retaining membership

until his death, although exactly half of his seventy years were spent abroad.

His secret diaries—kept in an obsolete shorthand—form a unique and valuable account of life, day by day, on a colonial southern plantation. They defeat the myth that southern plantation life was characterized chiefly by silken ease, horse racing, and mint juleps. They further establish Byrd as a systematic student of literature: he read Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and French with facility. His library of 3,600 volumes was one of the largest private collections to be assembled in America before the Revolution. At the time of his death he had completed the building of Westover, one of the finest colonial Virginia mansions. His holdings in land amounted to approximately 186,000 acres in Virginia and North Carolina.

Byrd's writings hold their place for the literary pleasure that they still provide, for the vitality and usefulness of their observation of American life, and for their foreshadowing, in the character of their author, of



the liberal, patrician leadership which produced Washington and Jefferson in the next generation. If Byrd was the cavalier, he was an Americanized cavalier, who opposed the authoritarian pretensions of Governor Spotswood, and defended the American planter gentry in their efforts to preserve local determination of their own government and taxation. He was at home with the society, literature, and learning of London in that brilliant first quarter of the eighteenth century—with Wycherley and Congreve, or with the Earl of Orrery; but he also loved Williamsburg, by contrast a rustic capital. His literary style reflected the enlightened humanism and worldly security of his British literary contemporaries, but he employed it, without deterioration, in the description of a rugged frontier. Trained in science and the practical arts as well as in literature, he brought a practical observation to bear on the products of the land and the customs and

characters of its inhabitants, both the Indians and the white frontiersmen. A Virginia gentleman, he was aware of the great social contrasts present in Virginia life, but he saw the potentialities both in the land and in its people.

The first publication of *The Westover Manuscripts* (containing the *History*, the *Progress*, and the *Journey*) was in 1841. A recent edition of these works is that edited by Mark Van Doren under the title *A Journey to the Land of Eden*, 1928. The Dietz Press, Richmond, published *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709–1712*, edited by Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, 1941; *Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739–1741*, edited by Maude H. Woodfin and Marion Tinling, 1942; and also *William Byrd's Natural History of Virginia*, edited by R. C. Beatty and William Mulloy, 1940.

The most reliable edition of the *History* and related materials is *William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina*, edited by W. K. Boyd, 1929. This volume includes the previously unpublished *Secret History*. The present text is based on this edition, with the reduction of irregular capitals and the regularizing of abbreviated words.

R. C. Beatty's *William Byrd of Westover*, 1932, is a full-length biography; and Byrd is included in Louis B. Wright's *The First Gentlemen of Virginia*, 1940.

## From The History of the Dividing Line<sup>1</sup>

### [Indian Neighbors]

\* \* \* I am sorry I cannot give a better account of the state of the poor Indians with respect to Christianity, although a great deal of pains has been and still continues to be taken with them. For my part, I must be of opinion, as I hinted before, that there is but one way of converting these poor infidels, and reclaiming them from barbarity, and that is, charitably to intermarry with them, according to the modern policy of the most Christian king in Canada and Louisiana.<sup>4</sup> Had the English done this at the first settlement of the

1. The official party, including commissioners and surveyors from both states, met on March 5, 1728, to begin the survey intended to establish the long-

disputed boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina.

4. Louis XV of France, reigned 1715–1774.

colony, the infidelity of the Indians had been worn out at this day, with their dark complexions, and the country had swarmed with people more than it does with insects. It was certainly an unreasonable nicety, that prevented their entering into so good-natured an alliance. All nations of men have the same natural dignity, and we all know that very bright talents may be lodged under a very dark skin. The principal difference between one people and another proceeds only from the different opportunities of improvement. The Indians by no means want understanding, and are in their figure tall and well-proportioned. Even their copper-colored complexion would admit of blanching, if not in the first, at the farthest in the second generation. I may safely venture to say, the Indian women would have made altogether as honest wives for the first planters, as the damsels they used to purchase from aboard the ships. It is strange, therefore, that any good Christian should have refused a wholesome, straight bed-fellow, when he might have had so fair a portion with her, as the merit of saving her soul.

[March 13, 1728.] This being Sunday, we rested from our fatigue, and had leisure to reflect on the signal mercies of Providence.

The great plenty of meat wherewith Bearskin<sup>5</sup> furnished us in these lonely woods made us once more shorten the men's allowance of bread, from five to four pounds of biscuit a week. This was the more necessary, because we knew not yet how long our business might require us to be out.

In the afternoon our hunters went forth, and returned triumphantly with three brace of wild turkeys. They told us they could see the mountains distinctly from every eminence, though the atmosphere was so thick with smoke that they appeared at a greater distance than they really were.

In the evening we examined our friend Bearskin, concerning the religion of his country, and he explained it to us, without any of that reserve to which his nation is subject. He told us he believed there was one supreme God, who had several subaltern deities under him. And that this master God made the world a long time ago. That he told the sun, the moon, and stars, their business in the beginning, which they, with good looking after, have faithfully performed ever since. That the same Power that made all things at first has taken care to keep them in the same method and motion ever since. He believed that God had formed many worlds before he formed this, but that those worlds either grew old and ruinous, or were destroyed for the dishonesty of the inhabitants. That God is very just and very good—ever well pleased with those men who possess those god-like qualities. That he takes good people into his safe protection, makes them very rich, fills their bellies plentifully, preserves them from

5. Their Indian guide and hunter.

sickness, and from being surprised or overcome by their enemies. But all such as tell lies, and cheat those they have dealings with, he never fails to punish with sickness, poverty and hunger, and, after all that, suffers them to be knocked on the head and scalped by those that fight against them. He believed that after death both good and bad people are conducted by a strong guard into a great road, in which departed souls travel together for some time, till at a certain distance this road forks into two paths, the one extremely level, and the other stony and mountainous. Here the good are parted from the bad by a flash of lightning, the first being hurried away to the right, the other to the left. The right hand road leads to a charming warm country, where the spring is everlasting, and every month is May; and as the year is always in its youth, so are the people, and particularly the women are bright as stars, and never scold. That in this happy climate there are deer, turkeys, elks, and buffaloes innumerable, perpetually fat and gentle, while the trees are loaded with delicious fruit quite throughout the four seasons. That the soil brings forth corn spontaneously, without the curse of labor, and so very wholesome, that none who have the happiness to eat of it are ever sick, grow old, or die. Near the entrance into this blessed land sits a venerable old man on a mat richly woven, who examines strictly all that are brought before him, and if they have behaved well, the guards are ordered to open the crystal gate, and let them enter into the land of delight. The left hand path is very rugged and uneven, leading to a dark and barren country, where it is always winter. The ground is the whole year round covered with snow, and nothing is to be seen upon the trees but icicles. All the people are hungry, yet have not a morsel of anything to eat, except a bitter kind of potato, that gives them the dry gripes, and fills their whole body with loathsome ulcers, that stink, and are insupportably painful. Here all the women are old and ugly, having claws like a panther, with which they fly upon the men that slight their passion. For it seems these haggard old furies are intolerably fond, and expect a vast deal of cherishing. They talk much, and exceedingly shrill, giving exquisite pain to the drum of the ear, which in that place of torment is so tender, that every sharp note wounds it to the quick. At the end of this path sits a dreadful old woman on a monstrous toad-stool, whose head is covered with rattle-snakes instead of tresses, with glaring white eyes, that strike a terror unspeakable into all that behold her. This hag pronounces sentence of woe upon all the miserable wretches that hold up their hands at her tribunal. After this they are delivered over to huge turkey-buzzards, like harpies, that fly away with them to the place above mentioned. Here, after they have been tormented a certain number of years, according to their several degrees of guilt, they are again driven back into this world, to try if they will mend

their manners, and merit a place the next time in the regions of bliss. This was the substance of Bearskin's religion, and was as much to the purpose as could be expected from a mere state of nature, without one glimpse of revelation or philosophy. It contained, however, the three great articles of natural religion: the belief of a God; the moral distinction betwixt good and evil; and the expectation of rewards and punishments in another world. Indeed, the Indian notion of a future happiness is a little gross and sensual, like Mahomet's paradise. But how can it be otherwise, in a people that are contented with Nature as they find her, and have no other lights but what they receive from purblind tradition?

1728

1841

### *From A Progress to the Mines*<sup>6</sup>

[*Reading a Play in the Backwoods*]

[Sept. 20, 1732.] I continued the bark,<sup>7</sup> and then tossed down my poached eggs, with as much ease as some good breeders slip children into the world. About nine I left the prudentest orders I could think of with my vizier, and then crossed the river to Shacco's. I made a running visit to three of my quarters,<sup>8</sup> where, besides finding all the people well, I had the pleasure to see better crops than usual both of corn and tobacco. I parted there with my intendant, and pursued my journey to Mr. Randolph's, at Tuckahoe, without meeting with any adventure by the way. Here I found Mrs. Fleming, who was packing up her baggage with design to follow her husband the next day, who was gone to a new settlement in Goochland. Both he and she have been about seven years persuading themselves to remove to that retired part of the country, though they had the two strong arguments of health and interest for so doing. The widow smiled graciously upon me, and entertained me very handsomely. Here I learned all the tragical story of her daughter's humble marriage with her uncle's overseer. Besides the meanness of this mortal's aspect, the man has not one visible qualification, except impudence, to recommend him to a female's inclinations. But there is sometimes such a charm in that Hibernian endowment, that frail woman cannot withstand it, though it stand alone without any other recommendation. Had she run away with a gentleman or a pretty fellow, there might have been some excuse for her, though he were of inferior fortune: but to stoop to a dirty plebeian, without any kind of

6. An account of a journey to the home and iron mines of former Governor Alexander Spotswood in the highlands of western Virginia. Byrd hoped to develop the iron on his own land. Goochland, named below as a stage, was about half

the distance.

7. Suffering from a fever, he has been taking doses of "bark" (quinine) and brandy.

8. *I.e.*, the living "quarters" for the slaves.

merit, is the lowest prostitution. I found the family justly enraged at it; and though I had more good nature than to join in her condemnation, yet I could devise no excuse for so senseless a prank as this young gentlewoman had played. Here good drink was more scarce than good victuals, the family being reduced to the last bottle of wine, which was therefore husbanded very carefully. But the water was excellent. The heir of the family did not come home till late in the evening. He is a pretty young man, but had the misfortune to become his own master too soon. This puts young fellows upon wrong pursuits, before they have sense to judge rightly for themselves. Though at the same time they have a strange conceit of their own sufficiency, when they grow near twenty years old, especially if they happen to have a small smattering of learning. It is then they fancy themselves wiser than all their tutors and governors, which makes them headstrong to all advice, and above all reproof and admonition.

[Sept. 21, 1732.] I was sorry in the morning to find myself stopped in my career by bad weather brought upon us by a northeast wind. This drives a world of raw unkindly vapors upon us from Newfoundland, laden with blight, coughs, and pleurisies. However, I complained not, lest I might be suspected to be tired of the good company. Though Mrs. Fleming was not so much upon her guard, but mutinied strongly at the rain, that hindered her from pursuing her dear husband. I said what I could to comfort a gentlewoman under so sad a disappointment. I told her a husband, that stayed so much at home as her's did, could be no such violent rarity, as for a woman to venture her precious health, to go daggling through the rain after him, or to be miserable if she happened to be prevented. That it was prudent for married people to fast sometimes from one another, that they might come together again with the better stomach. That the best things in this world, if constantly used, are apt to be cloying, which a little absence and abstinence would prevent. This was strange doctrine to a fond female, who fancies people should love with as little reason after marriage as before. In the afternoon monsieur Marij, the minister of the parish, came to make me a visit. He had been a Romish priest, but found reasons, either spiritual or temporal, to quit that gay religion. The fault of this new convert is, that he looks for as much respect from his protestant flock, as is paid to the popish clergy, which our ill-bred Hugonots do not understand. Madam Marij had so much curiosity as to want to come too; but another horse was wanting, and she believed it would have too vulgar an air to ride behind her husband. This woman was of the true exchange breed, full of discourse, but void of discretion, and married a parson, with the idle hopes he might some time or other come to be his grace of Canterbury. The gray mare is the

better horse in that family, and the poor man submits to her wild vagaries for peace' sake. She has just enough of the fine lady to run in debt, and be of no signification in her household. And the only thing that can prevent her from undoing her loving husband will be, that nobody will trust them beyond the sixteen thousand,<sup>9</sup> which is soon run out in a Goochland store. The way of dealing there is for some small merchant or peddler to buy a Scots pennyworth of goods, and clap one hundred and fifty per cent. upon that. At this rate the parson cannot be paid much more for his preaching than it is worth. No sooner was our visitor retired, but the facetious widow was so kind as to let me into all this secret history, but was at the same time exceedingly sorry that the woman should be so indiscreet, and and the man so tame as to be governed by an unprofitable and fantastical wife.

[Sept. 22, 1732.] We had another wet day, to try both Mrs. Fleming's patience and my good breeding. The northeast wind commonly sticks by us three or four days, filling the atmosphere with damps, injurious both to man and beast. The worst of it was, we had no good liquor to warm our blood, and fortify our spirits against so strong a malignity. However, I was cheerful under all these misfortunes, and expressed no concern but a decent fear lest my long visit might be troublesome. Since I was like to have thus much leisure, I endeavored to find out what subject a dull married man could introduce that might best bring the widow to the use of her tongue. At length I discovered she was a notable quack, and therefore paid that regard to her knowledge, as to put some questions to her about the bad distemper that raged then in the country. I mean the bloody flux, that was brought us in the negro-ship consigned to Col. Braxton. She told me she made use of very simple remedies in that case, with very good success. She did the business either with hartshorn drink, that had plantain leaves boiled in it, or else with a strong decoction of St. Andrew's cross, in new milk instead of water. I agreed with her that those remedies might be very good, but would be more effectual after a dose or two of Indian physic. But for fear this conversation might be too grave for a widow, I turned the discourse, and began to talk of plays, and finding her taste lay most towards comedy. I offered my service to read one to her, which she kindly accepted. She produced the second part of the *Beggar's Opera*,<sup>1</sup> which had diverted the town for forty nights successively, and gained four thousand pounds to the author. This was not owing altogether to the wit or humor that sparkled in it, but to some political reflections, that seemed to hit the ministry. But the great advantage of the

9. I.e., "sixteen thousand" pounds of tobacco, as this country clergyman's salary was reckoned.

1. *The Beggar's Opera*, by John Gay

(1685-1732), on the London stage in 1728, had proved one of the most successful of British plays.

author was, that his interest was solicited by the dutchess of Queensbury, which no man could refuse who had but half an eye in his head,<sup>2</sup> or half a guinea in his pocket. Her grace, like death, spared nobody, but even took my lord Selkirk<sup>3</sup> in for two guineas, to repair which extravagance he lived upon Scots herrings two months afterwards. But the best story was, she made a very smart officer in his majesty's guards give her a guinea, who swearing at the same time it was all he had in the world, she sent him fifty for it the next day, to reward his obedience. After having acquainted my company with the history of the play, I read three acts of it, and left Mrs. Fleming and Mr. Randolph to finish it, who read as well as most actors do at a rehearsal. Thus we killed the time, and triumphed over the bad weather.

1732

1841

2. In the tradition of that age of literary patronage, the Duchess became his patroness, and Gay passed several years, before his death at forty-seven, in the household of the Duke of Queensberry.

3. The first earl of Selkirk, William Douglas, of the ancient Scottish line; the jest concerning the frugality of the Scots is perennial.

## JOHN WOOLMAN

(1720-1772)

John Woolman's *Journal* (1774) is a "Quaker classic of the inner Light," and countless non-Quaker readers have been touched by its "exquisite purity and grace." Among the enduring autobiographies of the world, it shines apart, one of the few in which the record of the temporal life radiates a wholly spiritual and eternal light. The sentence with which, at thirty-six, Woolman began his *Journal*, contains the clue to its perfect candor and purity: "I have often felt a motion of love to leave some hints in writing of my experience of the goodness of God."

Such a vision of the interpenetration of the divine with the human had enkindled the evangelism of George Fox in England, about 1650. His fol-

lowers called themselves Friends but found an unfriendly world, for they were double-dyed dissenters, differing both from the established church and from the Puritan sects. The American Puritans, themselves fugitives from persecution, had grievously persecuted the Quakers, whose "heresies" certainly threatened a hierarchy founded on belief in original depravity, predestination, and limited election for salvation by grace. Quakers believed that Christ was the atonement for all mankind's sins, that the "inward light" of God's immanence was available to all who sought "in the spirit and in truth."

Woolman's *Journal* is clearer to the reader who understands these principles of the Quakers, and their other fundamental

testimony, that of quietness. The hysterical outbreaks of revivalism which marked the Puritan history are rare in the Quaker records; the Quaker trusted his "light" only in the controlled retrospect of his judgment. This is nowhere better illustrated than in Woolman's strict discipline of impulsive "concerns" by means of "religious exercise" and the "draught" or "leading" of his mind. That this discipline of responsibility inevitably compelled Friends toward the service of the human community is illustrated by Woolman's unflagging interest in the whole life about him. For the Quaker mystic, salvation did not await a millennium; mortal and immortal life were wonderfully and strangely one.

John Woolman was born in 1720, on a farm on the Rancocas in New Jersey, twenty miles from the Quaker city of the Penns. The young farmer experienced a growing companionship with nature, and a quietness favorable to the natural unfolding of a spirit essentially mystical. For his education there was the dame school, the Bible, the journals of Friends, some of them truly inspired, and always the close-knit community of the Quaker family and its meeting. At twenty he became a shopkeeper in nearby Mount Holly, and also learned the trade of the tailor. He prospered in his business and in his marriage, while his vocation soon led to his being "recorded" as a minister—the Friends' way of acknowledging by consensus the acceptability of the voluntary ministry that then provided their only

leadership.

As his religious vocation grew, Woolman was led, at the age of thirty-six, to give up his shop altogether and live upon the income from intermittent tailoring, which provided sufficient means for his frugal life. Thus he was enabled to respond to his evangelical "concern"; he made extensive visitations among Friends throughout the colonies, sometimes for months at a time, preaching the way of "Divine Love." In his ministry and in the tracts which he published from time to time, he became a force in the growing movement for toleration; he attacked the economic exploitation which was already producing poverty and wretchedness among the masses; he preached unceasingly against slavery, and published one of the earliest works in the American literature of abolition. He led the movement which secured the freedom of slaves held by American Quakers—the first general emancipation of slaves in America. The abolition of slavery was one of the concerns which he carried abroad in 1772, on a visit to the Friends' Meetings in England. In protest against the poverty of the British workers and the cruel conditions imposed upon the coachmen, he traveled through England on foot, preaching at various Meetings. In York he was taken ill, and he died of smallpox on October 7, 1772, less than a month after the last entries made in his *Journal*.

The standard collection is *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, edited by Amelia M. Gummere, 1922. This



contains a biography. Other biographies are Janet Whitney, *John Woolman, American Quaker*, 1942, and C. O. Pearce, *John Woolman, Child of Light*, 1954. For material on the Society of Friends, see Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, 1921; and Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism*, 1942. Since Woolman left two revisions of the manuscript of

the *Journal*, and since the first edition of the *Works*, 1774, was not accurate, it is natural that many variant readings appear in the more than forty editions that have been published in America and England. The Boston edition of 1871, with an introduction by J. G. Whittier, is followed here. The most recent one has been edited by Janet Whitney, 1950.

## From The Journal of John Woolman

### [*Quaker Faith and Practice*]

I was born in Northampton, in Burlington county, West-Jersey,<sup>1</sup> in the year 1720; and before I was seven years old I began to be acquainted with the operations of divine love. Through the care of my parents, I was taught to read nearly as soon as I was capable of it; and, as I went from school one seventh day,<sup>2</sup> I remember, while my companions went to play by the way, I went forward out of sight, and, sitting down, I read the 22d chapter of the Revelations. "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as chrystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb, &c." and, in reading it, my mind was drawn to seek after that pure habitation, which, I then believed, God had prepared for his servants. The place where I sat, and the sweetness that attended my mind, remain fresh in my memory.

This, and the like gracious visitations, had that effect upon me, that when boys used ill language it troubled me; and, through the continued mercies of God, I was preserved from it.

The pious instructions of my parents were often fresh in my mind when I happened to be among wicked children, and were of use to me. My parents, having a large family of children, used frequently, on first days after meeting,<sup>3</sup> to put us to read in the holy scriptures, or some religious books, one after another, the rest sitting by without much conversation; which, I have since often thought, was a good practice. From what I had read and heard, I believed there had been, in past ages, people who walked in uprightness before God, in a degree exceeding any that I knew, or heard of, now living; and the apprehension of there being less steadiness and firmness, amongst people in this age than in past ages, often troubled me while I was a child. \* \* \*

Advancing in age, the number of my acquaintances increased, and

1. The colonial "Jerseys" included East Jersey and West Jersey. The Woolman plantation (farm) was near Mount Holly, site of an early Quaker community affiliated with the Philadelphia Friends, twenty miles distant.

2. *I.e.*, Saturday. Quakers substituted numbers for the usual names of the days of the week, both to gain simplicity and to avoid celebration of pagan gods.

3. Quakers, like the early Puritans, replaced the formal "church" by a simple "meetinghouse."

thereby my way grew more difficult; though I had found comfort in reading the holy scriptures, and thinking on heavenly things, I was now estranged therefrom: I knew I was going from the flock of Christ, and had no resolution to return; hence serious reflections were uneasy to me, and youthful vanities and diversions my greatest pleasure. Running in this road I found many like myself; and we associated in that which is the reverse to true friendship.<sup>6</sup>

But in this swift race it pleased God to visit me with sickness, so that I doubted of recovering; and then did darkness, horror, and amazement, with full force, seize me, even when my pain and distress of body was very great. I thought it would have been better for me never to have had a being, than to see the day which I now saw. I was filled with confusion; and in great affliction, both of mind and body, I lay and bewailed myself. I had not confidence to lift up my cries to God, whom I had thus offended; but, in a deep sense of my great folly, I was humbled before him; and, at length, that word which is as a fire and a hammer, broke and dissolved my rebellious heart,<sup>7</sup> and then my cries were put up in contrition; and in the multitude of his mercies I found inward relief, and felt a close engagement, that, if he was pleased to restore my health, I might walk humbly before him.

After my recovery, this exercise<sup>8</sup> remained with me a considerable time; but, by degrees, giving way to youthful vanities, they gained strength, and, getting with wanton<sup>9</sup> young people, I lost ground. The Lord had been very gracious, and spoke peace to me in the time of my distress; and I now most ungratefully turned again to folly; on which account, at times, I felt sharp reproof. I was not so hardy as to commit things scandalous; but to exceed in vanity, and promote mirth, was my chief study. Still I retained a love for pious people, and their company brought an awe upon me. My dear parents, several times, admonished me in the fear of the Lord, and their admonition entered into my heart, and had a good effect for a season; but, not getting deep enough to pray rightly, the tempter, when he came, found entrance. I remember once, having spent a part of the day in wantonness, as I went to bed at night, there lay in a window, near my bed, a Bible, which I opened, and first cast my eye on this text, "We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covers us":<sup>1</sup> this I knew to be my case: and, meeting with so unexpected a reproof, I was somewhat affected with it, and went to bed under remorse of conscience; which I soon cast off again. \* \* \*

There is a harmony in the sound of that voice to which divine

6. The people known as Quakers called themselves Friends, or officially, the Religious Society of Friends.

7. Cf. Jeremiah xxiii: 29: "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock

in pieces?"

8. In the language of Friends, an experience or act conducive to religious faith.

9. Here meaning "worldly."

1. Jeremiah iii: 25.

love gives utterance, and some appearance of right order in their temper and conduct, whose passions are regulated; yet all these do not fully shew forth that inward life to such as have not felt it: But this white stone<sup>3</sup> and new name is known rightly to such only as have it.

Though I have been thus strengthened to bear the cross, I still found myself in great danger, having many weaknesses attending me, and strong temptations to wrestle with; in the feeling whereof I frequently withdrew into private places, and often with tears besought the Lord to help me, whose gracious ear was open to my cry.

All this time I lived with my parents, and wrought on the plantation; and, having had schooling pretty well for a planter, I used to improve it in winter-evenings, and other leisure times; and, being now in the twenty-first year of my age, a man, in much business at shop-keeping and baking, asked me, if I would hire with him to tend shop and keep books. I acquainted my father with the proposal; and, after some deliberation, it was agreed for me to go.

At home I had lived retired; and now, having a prospect of being much in the way of company, I felt frequent and fervent cries in my heart to God, the father of mercies, that he would preserve me from all corruption; that in this more publick employment, I might serve him, my gracious Redeemer, in that humility and self-denial, with which I had been, in a small degree, exercised in a more private life. The man, who employed me, furnished a shop in Mount-Holly, about five miles from my father's house, and six from his own; and there I lived alone, and tended his shop.

\* \* \* Every trial was a fresh incitement to give myself up wholly to the service of God, for I found no helper like him in times of trouble. After a while, my former acquaintance gave over expecting me as one of their company; and I began to be known to some whose conversation was helpful to me: and now, as I had experienced the love of God, through Jesus Christ, to redeem me from many pollutions, and to be a succour to me through a sea of conflicts, with which no person was fully acquainted; and as my heart was often enlarged in this heavenly principle, I felt a tender compassion for the youth, who remained entangled in snares, like those which had entangled me from one time to another: this love and tenderness increased; and my mind was more strongly engaged for the good of my fellow-creatures. I went to meetings in an awful frame of mind, and endeavoured to be inwardly acquainted with the language of the true Shepherd; and, one day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up, and said some words in a meeting; but, not keeping close to the divine opening, I said more than was required of me; and

3. Revelation ii: 17: "To him that overcometh will I give \* \* \* a white stone.

and in the stone a new name written \* \* \*"

being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks, without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in any thing: I remembered God, and was troubled, and, in the depth of my distress, he had pity upon me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offence, and my mind became calm and quiet, being truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies; and, after this, feeling the spring of divine love opened, and a concern<sup>5</sup> to speak, I said a few words in a meeting, in which I found peace; this, I believe, was about six weeks from the first time: and, as I was thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart,<sup>6</sup> and taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature.

[Cases of Conscience]

My employer having a negro woman, sold her, and desired me to write a bill of sale, the man being waiting who bought her: the thing was sudden; and, though the thoughts of writing an instrument of slavery for one of my fellow-creatures felt uneasy, yet I remembered I was hired by the year, that it was my master who directed me to do it, and that it was an elderly man, a member of our society,<sup>9</sup> who bought her; so, through weakness, I gave way, and wrote; but, at the executing it, I was so afflicted in my mind, that I said, before my master and the friend, that I believed slave-keeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion. This in some degree abated my uneasiness; yet, as often as I reflected seriously upon it, I thought I should have been clearer, if I had desired to have been excused from it, as a thing against my conscience; for such it was. And, some time after this, a young man, of our society, spoke to me to write a conveyance of a slave to him, he having lately taken a negro into his house: I told him I was not easy to write it; for, though many of our meeting and in other places kept slaves, I still believed the practice was not right, and desired to be excused from the writing. I spoke to him in good will; and he told me that keeping slaves was not altogether agreeable to his mind; but that the slave being a gift to his wife, he had accepted of her.

Until the year 1756, I continued to retail goods, besides following my trade as a tailor; about which time I grew uneasy on account of

5. In the Friends' terminology, a compelling inward motivation for an action or message approved by the judgment.

6. Friends hold themselves responsible to an "inward light" which, however, is genuine only when "disciplined understanding" distinguishes between selfish

desire and the immanent radiance of God.

9. The Society of Friends. Woolman later led the successful movement to liberate the slaves held by Quakers—the first American emancipation.

my business growing too cumbersome. I began with selling trimmings for garments, and from thence proceeded to sell cloths and linens; and at length, having got a considerable shop of goods, my trade increased every year, and the road to large business appeared open: but I felt a stop in my mind.

Through the mercies of the Almighty, I had, in a good degree, learned to be content with a plain way of living.<sup>1</sup> I had but a small family; and on serious reflection, I believed Truth did not require me to engage in many cumbering affairs. It had generally been my practice to buy and sell things really useful. Things that served chiefly to please the vain mind in people, I was not easy to trade in; seldom did it, and whenever I did, I found it to weaken me as a Christian.

The increase of business became my burthen; for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise, yet I believed Truth required me to live more free from outward cumberers. There was now a strife in my mind betwixt the two, and in this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me, and gave me a heart resigned to his holy will; I then lessened my outward business; and as I had opportunity, told my customers of my intention, that they might consider what shop to turn to; and so in a while, wholly laid down merchandise, following my trade as a tailor, myself only, having no prentice. I also had a nursery of apple trees, in which I spent a good deal of time hoeing, grafting, trimming, and inoculating.

In merchandise it is the custom, where I lived, to sell chiefly on credit, and poor people often get in debt; and when payment is expected, having not wherewith to pay, and so their creditors often sue for it at law. Having often observed occurrences of this kind, I found it good for me to advise poor people to take such goods as were most useful and not costly.

In the time of trading, I had an opportunity of seeing that a too liberal use of spirituous liquors, and the custom of wearing too costly apparel, led some people into great inconveniences; and these two things appear to be often connected one with the other; for by not attending to that use of things which is consistent with universal righteousness, there is an increase of labor which extends beyond what our heavenly Father intends for us; and by great labor, and often by much sweating in the heat, there is, even among such who are not drunkards, a craving of some liquor to revive the spirits; that, partly by the luxurious drinking of some, and partly by the drinking of others, led to it through immoderate labor, very great quantities of rum are annually expended in our colonies; of which we should have no need, did we steadily attend to pure wisdom. \* \* \*

1. Friends adopted "plainness," not to achieve asceticism, but to retain "the simplicity that is in Christ" described

by Paul (II Corinthians xi: 3, and i: 12).

As every degree of luxury hath some connection with evil; for those who profess to be disciples of Christ, and are looked upon as leaders of the people, to have that mind in them, which was also in Christ, and so stand separate from every wrong way, is a means of help to the weaker. \* \* \* I have felt an increasing care to attend to that holy Spirit which sets right bounds to our desires, and leads those who faithfully follow it, to apply all the gifts of Divine Providence to the purposes for which they were intended.

1756

1774

## ST. JEAN DE CRÈVECŒUR

(1735-1813)

St. Jean de Crèveœur (christened Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèveœur), born of a distinguished and ancient family near Caen, was educated strictly but well in a Jesuit school, and then visited England. At the age of nineteen he was in Canada, a lieutenant in the French army under Montcalm. In this service he surveyed and mapped large areas around the Great Lakes and in the Ohio country. He was in New York by 1759; he later roamed, an observant pilgrim, through the frontiers of New York, Pennsylvania, and the southern colonies. He became a citizen of New York in 1765, soon acquired a plantation in Orange County some sixty miles from the city, and married in 1769. There he remained, a successful planter, until the Revolution, writing down his impressions of rural America, "a land of happy farmers" and a haven of equality and freedom for the oppressed and dispossessed of Europe.

In spite of these liberal enthusiasms, his training was aris-

tocratic, and he had sworn allegiance to Britain; his mildly Tory inclinations appear repeatedly in the *Letters*, particularly in those that he suppressed in his lifetime. In this equivocal mood he found himself suspected by both sides, and returned to France in 1780. *Letters from an American Farmer* appeared in London two years later; an enlarged but sentimentalized version in French was published in Paris in 1783.

The influence of Franklin and French friends secured his appointment as French consul to New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He returned to America in 1783, to find his wife dead, his children adopted by a Boston family, and his plantation home wrecked by an Indian raid. Until 1790 he remained in New York, devoting himself to the cause of good relations between his mother country and his adopted land. The last twenty-three years of his life were spent in his ancestral Normandy. His only later publication was the *Voyage dans la*

*Haute Pensylvanie et dans l'Etat de New-York* (1801). His suppressed letters from the earlier series remained unpublished and forgotten until their rediscovery by American scholars resulted in the *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America* (1925).

Crèvecoeur exemplifies a number of ideals prevalent both in America and in Europe during the late eighteenth century. He subscribed in some degree to Rousseau's idealization of natural man as inherently good when free, and subject to corruption only by artificial urban society. He was an anticlerical like Thomas Paine, with a strong

distrust for organized religion. Along with Jefferson and Franklin he held the physiocratic faith that agriculture was the basis of our economy; and he believed in humanitarian action to correct such abuses as slavery, civil disturbance, war, and the poverty of the masses.

A good and available edition of Crèvecoeur is the *Letters from an American Farmer*, edited by W. P. Trent and Ludwig Lewisohn, 1904; see also *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America*, edited by H. L. Bourdin, R. H. Gabriel, and S. T. Williams, 1925. For biography and criticism, see Julia P. Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 1916; H. C. Rice, *Le Cultivateur Américain: Etude sur l'Œuvre de Saint John de Crèvecoeur*, 1933; and the essay by Stanley T. Williams in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1930.

## From Letters from an American Farmer

### What Is an American?<sup>1</sup>

I wish I could be acquainted with the feelings and thoughts which must agitate the heart and present themselves to the mind of an enlightened Englishman, when he first lands on this continent. He must greatly rejoice that he lived at a time to see this fair country discovered<sup>2</sup> and settled; he must necessarily feel a share of national pride, when he views the chain of settlements which embellishes these extended shores. When he says to himself, this is the work of my countrymen, who, when convulsed by factions, afflicted by a variety of miseries and wants, restless and impatient, took refuge here. They brought along with them their national genius, to which they principally owe what liberty they enjoy, and what substance they possess. Here he sees the industry of his native country displayed in a new manner, and traces in their works the embryos of all the arts, sciences, and ingenuity which flourish in Europe. Here he beholds fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges, where an hundred years ago all was wild, woody, and uncultivated! What a

1. Title of the third Letter (or essay), reproduced in part in this volume. The first three of the twelve Letters provide a discussion of American life and ideals in general. Four deal with the island of Nantucket—its topography, industry, social life, education, manners, and customs. One describes Martha's Vineyard and its whaling life; another, on Charles-

ton, South Carolina, contains an attack on slavery. The book concludes with three essays including observations of nature, an account of a visit with John Bartram, the Philadelphia naturalist, and a final commentary on various subjects, showing a Tory bias.

2. Explored.

train of pleasing ideas this fair spectacle must suggest; it is a prospect which must inspire a good citizen with the most heartfelt pleasure. The difficulty consists in the manner of viewing so extensive a scene. He is arrived on a new continent; a modern society offers itself to his contemplation, different from what he had hitherto seen. It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything, and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one; no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe. Some few towns excepted, we are all tillers of the earth, from Nova Scotia to West Florida. We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory, communicating with each other by means of good roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, because they are equitable. We are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself. If he travels through our rural districts he views not the hostile castle, and the haughty mansion, contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin, where cattle and men help to keep each other warm, and dwell in meanness, smoke, and indigence. A pleasing uniformity of recent competence appears throughout our habitations. The meanest of our log-houses is a dry and comfortable habitation. Lawyer or merchant are the fairest titles our towns afford; that of a farmer is the only appellation of the rural inhabitants of our country. It must take some time ere he can reconcile himself to our dictionary, which is but short in words of dignity, and names of honour. There, on a Sunday, he sees a congregation of respectable farmers and their wives, all clad in neat homespun, well mounted, or riding in their own humble waggons. There is not among them an esquire, saving the unlettered magistrate. There he sees a parson as simple as his flock, a farmer who does not riot on the labour of others. We have no princes, for whom we toil, starve, and bleed: we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be; nor is this pleasing equality so transitory as many others are. Many ages will not see the shores of our great lakes replenished with inland nations, nor the unknown bounds of North America entirely peopled. Who can tell how far it extends? Who can tell the millions of men whom it will feed and contain? for no European foot has as yet travelled half the extent of this mighty continent!

The next wish of this traveller will be to know whence came all these people? they are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that



race now called Americans have arisen. The eastern provinces<sup>3</sup> must indeed be excepted, as being the unmixed descendants of Englishmen. I have heard many wish that they had been more intermixed also: for my part, I am no wisher, and think it much better as it has happened. They exhibit a most conspicuous figure in this great and variegated picture; they too enter for a great share in the pleasing perspective displayed in these thirteen provinces. I know it is fashionable to reflect on them, but I respect them for what they have done; for the accuracy and wisdom with which they have settled their territory; for the decency of their manners; for their early love of letters; their ancient college,<sup>4</sup> the first in this hemisphere; for their industry; which to me who am but a farmer, is the criterion of everything. There never was a people, situated as they are, who with so ungrateful a soil have done more in so short a time. Do you think that the monarchical ingredients which are more prevalent in other governments, have purged them from all foul stains? Their histories assert the contrary.

In this great American asylum, the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence of various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another what countrymen they are? Alas, two thirds of them had no country. Can a wretch who wanders about, who works and starves, whose life is a continual scene of sore affliction or pinching penury; can that man call England or any other kingdom his country? A country that had no bread for him, whose fields procured him no harvest, who met with nothing but the frowns of the rich, the severity of the laws, with jails and punishments; who owned not a single foot of the extensive surface of this planet? No! urged by a variety of motives, here they came. Every thing has tended to regenerate them; new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mould, and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war; but now by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished! Formerly they were not numbered in any civil lists of their country, except in those of the poor; here they rank as citizens. By what invisible power has this surprising metamorphosis been performed? By that of the laws and that of their industry. The laws, the indulgent laws, protect them as they arrive, stamping on them the symbol of adoption; they receive ample rewards for their labours; these accumulated rewards procure them lands; those lands confer on them the title of freemen, and to that title every benefit is affixed which men can possibly require. This is the great operation daily performed by our laws. From

3. New England.

4. Harvard, founded in 1636, the first colonial college.

whence proceed these laws? From our government. Whence the government? It is derived from the original genius and strong desire of the people ratified and confirmed by the crown. This is the great chain which links us all, this is the picture which every province exhibits, Nova Scotia excepted. There the crown has done all;<sup>5</sup> either there were no people who had genius, or it was not much attended to: the consequence is, that the province is very thinly inhabited indeed; the power of the crown in conjunction with the musketos has prevented men from settling there. Yet some parts of it flourished once, and it contained a mild harmless set of people. But for the fault of a few leaders, the whole were banished. The greatest political error the crown ever committed in America, was to cut off men from a country which wanted nothing but men!

What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? The knowledge of the language, the love of a few kindred as poor as himself, were the only cords that tied him: his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequence. *Ubi panis ibi patria*,<sup>6</sup> is the motto of all emigrants. What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will here after become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest*; can it want a stronger allurements? Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome,

5. This satiric passage refers to the banishment, in 1755, of the French Acadians from Nova Scotia, which the British

had conquered in 1710.

6. Where there is bread, there is one's fatherland.

gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all; without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord. Here religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary to the minister, and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence.—This is an American. \* \* \*

1770-1775

1782



# Reason and Revolution

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

(1706-1790)

Franklin was the epitome of the Enlightenment, the versatile, practical embodiment of rational man in the eighteenth century. His mind approved and his behavior demonstrated the fundamental concepts of the Age of Reason—faith in the reality of the world as revealed to the senses, distrust of the mystical or mysterious, confidence in the attainment of progress by education and humanitarianism, and the assurance that an appeal to Reason would provide solutions for all human problems, including those of the society and the state. Many of his contemporaries ordered their personal lives by such beliefs, but it was Franklin's particular genius to make the rational life comprehensible and practicable to his countrymen.

In the years between his birth in Boston, in 1706, and his death in Philadelphia, in 1790, incredible political and economic changes occurred; after a successful struggle with France for domination of the North American continent, England recognized the independence of thirteen of her colonies in a

treaty signed in Paris; the philosophy of rational individualism undermined the position of established church and aristocracy; and the new empirical science, responding to Newton's discoveries, again awakened man's dream of mastering his physical world. Other men were pioneers in some of these events, but in all of them Benjamin Franklin actively participated—and left a written record unsurpassed for its penetration, objectivity, and wit.

His early years in Boston, spent reluctantly in his father's tallow shop and sporadically at school, were typical of the experience of a child in a colonial town; then, at the age of twelve, the boy was apprenticed to his brother James, a printer. There followed the long hours of work and the regimen of self-education so graphically recalled in Franklin's *Autobiography*, written many years later for his son, William. In 1722, when his brother was jailed for offending the authorities in his *New England Courant*, sixteen-year-old Benjamin took over the editorship of the paper, and under the

pseudonym of Silence Dogood, continued his editorials on subjects ranging from the merits of higher education to freedom of the press. The next year, after disagreements with his brother, he took ship for Philadelphia, arriving in October, 1723, and created a favorite American anecdote by walking up from the Market Street wharf in the morning, munching on one of the "three great puffy rolls" he had purchased with his last pennies. He quickly found employment with Keimer, a printer, and after various activities, including a two-year stay in London, became sole owner of a printing firm which by his industry, frugality, and wise investments enabled him to retire from active business in 1748, when he was only forty-two years old. The years that lay ahead were to give him the varied experiences of a politician, statesman, and public citizen, but the discipline and adaptability which he urged upon his fellow citizens were characteristics of a proficient artisan devoted to his craft. Years later, although academic and international honors had been pressed upon him, he wrote as the opening words of his will, "I, Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, printer \* \* \*"

It was characteristic of Franklin that he not only printed legal forms, copies of Indian treaties, and acts of the Pennsylvania Assembly, but also made of a common aid to the farmer and merchant, the yearly almanac, a characteristically American thing. *Poor Richard's Almanack* gave the usual information on weather and currency,

but the aphorisms, their sources ranging from Greek to English writers, became, by the turn of a phrase, American in vocabulary and implication.

His profession may have provided opportunity for acquaintance with the colonial leaders of Pennsylvania, but it was his unceasing energy and interest in humanity that directed his talents into a variety of civic projects. Franklin brought them about by perseverant ingenuity—such far-reaching institutions as the first circulating library, and more immediate measures, such as the lottery for the erection of steeple and chimes for Christ Church. Among the surviving monuments to his genius for the practical utilization of humane ideas are our first learned society—the American Philosophical Society; our first colonial hospital—the Pennsylvania Hospital; and the University of Pennsylvania, the first such institution to be founded upon the ideal of secular education which he formulated in a number of his writings.

His inquiring mind, energized by his confidence in the progress of rational man, turned as naturally to speculative thought as to ingenious inventions and to the improvement of the institutions of daily life. Nothing was more engrossing to Franklin than the manifestations of nature, so long in the realm of the theoretical or mystical, but now, with the stirring advance of eighteenth-century science, convincingly demonstrated to men's minds by scrupulous techniques of experimental observation. Franklin's curiosity ranged

from the causes of earthquakes and the benefits of the Gulf Stream to navigation, to the possible association of lightning and electricity. As early as 1746 he became acquainted through correspondence with English scientists, and his enthusiastic assimilation of their information led to experiments with the Leyden jar and culminated in the famous kite-and-key experiment in 1752. His *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (1751-1753) brought him international fame.

With the interest in science, the eighteenth century saw a corresponding growth of rationalism and skepticism in religion. Largely derivative from Shaftesbury and Locke, Deism, which stood a pole apart from the orthodoxy of the time, offered minds such as Franklin's an opportunity for reliance on a creative deity and freedom from the strictures of traditional theology. Franklin's earlier doubts became tempered in his later life to a benevolent eclecticism of moderation in action and a reasoned faith in God.

His leadership in civic enterprises and business might in itself have involved Franklin in the struggle for independence from England, but long before 1776 he had demonstrated qualities of statesmanship. He had learned the intricacies and intrigues of a proprietary colonial government in the fifteen years before 1751 during which he served as clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly. And his consummate skill as diplomat in England, and in France in 1783, was the result of long experience,

which had begun with his mission, many years earlier, to obtain a treaty with the Ohio Indians.

In two lengthy trips to England between 1757 and 1775, he had served as colonial agent for Pennsylvania, Georgia, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, hoping for conciliation between England and the American colonies, but making a masterful defense against the Stamp Act. He returned to Philadelphia in time to serve in the Second Continental Congress and to be chosen, with Jefferson, as a member of the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence. After two years in France as the agent of Congress, Franklin successfully negotiated a treaty of alliance in 1778; and with John Jay and John Adams, he arranged the terms and signed the Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolution. The nine years he spent at Passy, near Paris, brought him the affectionate adulation of the French, and from his private press came beautifully printed and whimsical "Bagatelles," such as "The Whistle," "The Ephemeris," and "To Madame Helvetius."

Franklin returned to Philadelphia in 1785, became president of the executive council of Pennsylvania for three years, and closed his brilliant career by serving as a member of the Constitutional Convention. His death in 1790 was the occasion for international mourning for a man who had become a symbol of democratic action in America and Europe. Six years earlier, when Jefferson was con-

gratulated on replacing Franklin as minister at Paris, he responded, "No one can replace him, Sir; I am only his successor." There has been, in fact, no one since to replace him; he stands alone.

A new authoritative edition of Franklin's collected works is in process. The present most available edition is *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols., edited by Albert H. Smyth, 1905-1907; but this omits certain texts to be found in John Bigelow's edition of *The Complete Works*, 10 vols., 1887-1889, which also contains Bigelow's edition of the *Autobiography*, 1868. A number of selections from Franklin's writings are available; especially well-balanced is *Franklin: Representative Selections*, edited by F. L. Mott and C. L. Jorgensen, American Writers Series, 1936. A modern biography, judicious and well documented, is *Benjamin Franklin*, by Carl Van Doren, 1938. However, for special

study, several other works are useful, especially James Parton, *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, 2 vols., 1864; *The Life of Benjamin Franklin* \* \* \*, 3 vols., edited by John Bigelow, 1874 (1916); J. B. McMaster, *Benjamin Franklin as Man of Letters*, 1887; P. L. Ford, *The Many-Sided Franklin*, 1899; Bernard Fay, *Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times*, 1929.

For special topics, and for the various recent collections of Franklin letters, see Bibliography. *Literary History of the United States*, edited by Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, Thomas H. Johnson, and Henry Seidel Canby, Vol. 111, 1948, Sup., 1959. On the text of the *Autobiography*, see Max Farrand, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: A Restoration of a "Fair Copy,"* 1949, and *Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs, Parallel Text Edition*, edited by Max Farrand, 1949. The texts below are based on the Bigelow edition, unless otherwise noted. Except for the selections from *Poor Richard's Almanack*, all texts have been normalized in respect to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviated forms.

## From The Autobiography<sup>1</sup>

TWYFORD,<sup>2</sup> at the Bishop of St. Asaph's, 1771.

DEAR SON:

I have ever had a pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England,<sup>3</sup> and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Now imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know the circumstances of my life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with, and expecting a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you. To which I have besides some other inducements. Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a consid-

1. At sixty-five, Franklin wrote an account of his first twenty-four years, intended for his son, William, then colonial governor of New Jersey. Years later he was persuaded by friends to continue it. Additions in 1783, 1784, and 1788 more than doubled the size of the original manuscript, but brought the account only to the years 1757-1759, before the great period of Franklin's public service and international influence. He did not publish this work. The selections below are based on the collation of Bigelow with Farrand's edition of the original

manuscript in *Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs*. The language of our text is not "modernized," but mechanical handicaps to the present-day reader have been avoided.

2. In England, near Winchester. Franklin had become intimate with Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph's, who approved a more liberal policy for the colonies.

3. His son, William Franklin, went to England as his father's secretary in 1757, studied law there, and later served as royal governor of New Jersey.

erable share of felicity, the conducing means I made use of, which with the blessing of God so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations, and therefore fit to be imitated.

That felicity, when I reflected on it, has induced me sometimes to say that were it offered to my choice I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. So would I, if I might, besides correcting the faults, change some sinister accidents and events of it for others more favorable. But though this was denied, I should still accept the offer. However, since such a repetition is not to be expected, the next thing most like living one's life over again seems to be a *recollection* of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible the putting it down in writing. \* \* \*

And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which led me to the means I used and gave them success. My belief of this induces me to *hope*, though I must not *presume*, that the same goodness will still be exercised towards me, in continuing that happiness or in enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done, the complexion of my future fortune being known to Him only in whose power it is to bless to us even our afflictions.

The notes one of my uncles (who had the same kind of curiosity in collecting family anecdotes) once put into my hands furnished me with several particulars relating to our ancestors. From these notes I learned that the family had lived in the same village, Ecton, in Northamptonshire, for three hundred years, and how much longer he knew not (perhaps from the time when the name Franklin, that before was the name of an order of people, was assumed by them for a surname when others took surnames all over the kingdom), on a freehold of about thirty acres, aided by the smith's business, which had continued in the family till his time, the eldest son being always bred to that business—a custom which he and my father both followed as to their eldest sons. \* \* \*

Josiah, my father, married young, and carried his wife with three children into New England about 1682. The conventicle<sup>4</sup> having been forbidden by law and frequently disturbed induced some considerable men of his acquaintance to remove to that country, and he was prevailed with to accompany them thither, where they expected to enjoy their mode of religion with freedom. By the same wife he had four children more born there, and by a second wife ten more, in all seventeen; of which I remember thirteen sitting at

4. Religious assemblies of dissenters, made illegal by the Act of Uniformity, 1662.



one time at his table, who all grew up to be men and women, and married; I was the youngest son, and the youngest child but two, and was born in Boston, New England. My mother, the second wife, was Abiah Folger, a daughter of Peter Folger,<sup>5</sup> one of the first settlers of New England, of whom honorable mention is made by Cotton Mather, in his church history of that country, entitled *Magnalia Christi Americana*, as "a godly, learned Englishman," if I remember the words rightly. I have heard that he wrote sundry small occasional pieces, but only one of them was printed, which I saw now many years since. \* \* \*

My elder brothers were all put apprentices to different trades. I was put to the grammar school at eight years of age, my father intending to devote me, as the tithe of his sons, to the service of the church. My early readiness in learning to read (which must have been very early, as I do not remember when I could not read) and the opinion of all his friends that I should certainly make a good scholar encouraged him in this purpose of his. My uncle Benjamin, too, approved of it, and proposed to give me all his shorthand volumes of sermons, I suppose as a stock to set up with, if I would learn his character.<sup>6</sup> I continued, however, at the grammar school not quite one year, though in that time I had risen gradually from the middle of the class of that year to be the head of it, and farther was removed into the next class above it, in order to go with that into the third at the end of the year. But my father, in the meantime, from a view of the expense of a college education, which having so large a family he could not well afford, and the mean living many so educated were afterwards able to obtain—reasons that he gave to his friends in my hearing—altered his first intention, took me from the grammar school, and sent me to a school for writing and arithmetic, kept by a then famous man, Mr. George Brownell, very successful in his profession generally, and that by mild, encouraging methods. Under him I acquired fair writing pretty soon, but I failed in the arithmetic, and made no progress in it. At ten years old I was taken home to assist my father in his business, which was that of a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler; a business he was not bred to, but had assumed on his arrival in New England, and on finding his dying trade would not maintain his family, being in little request. Accordingly, I was employed in cutting wick for the candles, filling the dipping mold and the molds for cast candles, attending the shop, going of errands, etc. \* \* \*

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterwards sold them to enable me to

5. Peter Folger (1617-1690), pioneer of Nantucket, a schoolmaster, published a volume of ballads condemning the

Puritans for lack of religious toleration.  
6. His shorthand.

buy R. Burton's *Historical Collections*; they were small chapman's books, and cheap, forty or fifty in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read and have since often regretted that at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way, since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman. *Plutarch's Lives* there was, in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of Defoe's,<sup>7</sup> called an *Essay on Projects*, and another of Dr. Mather's,<sup>8</sup> called *Essays to do Good*, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.

This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from England with a press and letters to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of my father, but still had a hankering for the sea. To prevent the apprehended effect of such an inclination, my father was impatient to have me bound to my brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded, and signed the indentures when I was yet but twelve years old. \* \* \*

And after some time an ingenious tradesman, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, and who frequented our printing-house, took notice of me, invited me to his library, and very kindly lent me such books as I chose to read. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces; my brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing two occasional ballads. One was called *The Lighthouse Tragedy*, and contained an account of the drowning of Captain Worthilake with his two daughters; the other was a sailor's song, on the taking of Teach (or Blackbeard), the pirate.<sup>9</sup> They were wretched stuff, in the Grub-street-ballad style; and when they were printed he sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one; but as prose writing has been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a principal means of my advancement, I shall tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I have in that way. \* \* \*

7. Daniel Defoe's *Essay upon Projects* (1697) advanced such liberal social proposals as insurance and popular education.

8. Cotton Mather's essays, originally entitled *Bonifacius* (1710), emphasized practical virtues, and influenced Franklin's early *Dogood Papers* (1722).

9. Narrative poems on the sensational

news of the day were quickly printed as "broad-sides" to be sold on the streets. During 1717-1718, George Worthilake, keeper of the Boston Light, was drowned with his family while rowing to Boston; and "Blackbeard," or Edward Teach, famed pirate of the southern coast, was killed by a British naval expedition.

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*.<sup>1</sup> It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With that view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind and make me master of it. Therefore, I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them. \* \* \*

While I was intent on improving my language, I met with an English grammar (I think it was Greenwood's), at the end of which there were two little sketches of the arts of rhetoric and logic, the latter finishing with a specimen of a dispute in the Socratic method; and soon after I procured Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*,<sup>4</sup> wherein there are many instances of the same method. I was charmed with it, adopted it, dropped my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter. And being then, from reading Shaftesbury and Collins,<sup>5</sup> became a real doubter in many points of our religious doctrine, I found this method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I took a delight in it, practiced it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they

1. Famous British periodical (1711-1712) largely the work of Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele.

4. Title of Edward Bysshe's translation (1712) of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Note that Franklin was already familiar with the "Socratic method" of argument from reading James Greenwood's *Grammar* (1711), which emphasized, in the

fashion of the day, the logical bases of grammar and rhetoric.

5. The Earl of Shaftesbury's collected essays, *Characteristics* \*\*\* (1711, 1713), are here associated with Anthony Collins' *Discourse* \*\*\* (1713), because both are "free thinking" in theology; Shaftesbury also influenced Franklin's rational view of morality.

did not foresee, entangling them in difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved. I continued this method some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced anything that may possibly be disputed, the words *certainly*, *undoubtedly*, or any others that give the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather say, I conceive or apprehend a thing to be so or so; it appears to me, or I should think it so or so, for such and such reasons; or I imagine it to be so; or it is so, if I am not mistaken. This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions and persuade men into measures that I have been from time to time engaged in promoting; and, as the chief ends of conversation are to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive, assuming manner that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition and to defeat every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure. \* \* \*

My brother had, in 1720 or 21, begun to print a newspaper. It was the second that appeared in America, and was called the *New England Courant*.<sup>6</sup> The only one before it was the *Boston News-Letter*. \* \* \*

He had some ingenious men among his friends, who amused themselves by writing little pieces for this paper, which gained it credit and made it more in demand, and these gentlemen often visited us. Hearing their conversations, and their accounts of the approbation their papers were received with, I was excited to try my hand among them; but, being still a boy, and suspecting that my brother would object to printing anything of mine in his paper if he knew it to be mine, I contrived to disguise my hand and, writing an anonymous paper, I put it in at night under the door of the printing-house. It was found in the morning and communicated to his writing friends when they called in as usual. They read it, commented on it in my hearing, and I had the exquisite pleasure of finding it met with their approbation, and that, in their different guesses at the author, none were named but men of some character among us for learning and ingenuity. I suppose now that I was rather lucky in my judges, and that perhaps they were not really so very good ones as I then esteemed them.

Encouraged, however, by this, I wrote and conveyed in the same

6. Actually, James Franklin's *New England Courant* (1721-1726), was the fifth American newspaper. *Publick Occurrences* appeared in Boston, for one

issue only, in 1690; it was followed by the *Boston News-Letter*, 1704, the *Boston Gazette*, 1719, and, in Philadelphia, the *American Weekly Mercury*, 1719.

way to the press several more papers which were equally approved;<sup>7</sup> and I kept my secret till my small fund of sense for such performances was pretty well exhausted, and then I discovered it, when I began to be considered a little more by my brother's acquaintance, and in a manner that did not quite please him, as he thought, probably with reason, that it tended to make me too vain. And perhaps this might be one occasion of the differences that we began to have about this time. Though a brother, he considered himself as my master, and me as his apprentice, and accordingly expected the same services from me as he would from another, while I thought he demeaned me too much in some he required of me, who from a brother expected more indulgence.<sup>8</sup> \* \* \*

One of the pieces in our newspaper on some political point, which I have now forgotten, gave offense to the Assembly. He was taken up, censured, and imprisoned for a month, by the speaker's warrant, I suppose because he would not discover his author. \* \* \*

During my brother's confinement, which I resented a good deal, notwithstanding our private differences, I had the management of the paper; and I made bold to give our rulers some rubs in it, which my brother took very kindly, while others began to consider me in an unfavorable light, as a young genius that had a turn for libeling and satire. My brother's discharge was accompanied with an order of the House (a very odd one), that "James Franklin should no longer print the paper called the *New England Courant*."

There was a consultation held in our printing-house among his friends what he should do in this case. Some proposed to evade the order by changing the name of the paper; but my brother seeing inconveniences in that, it was finally concluded on as a better way to let it be printed for the future under the name of *Benjamin Franklin*;<sup>9</sup> and to avoid the censure of the Assembly, that might fall on him as still printing it by his apprentice, the contrivance was that my old indenture should be returned to me, with a full discharge on the back of it, to be shown on occasion; but to secure to him the benefit of my service, I was to sign new indentures for the remainder of the term, which were to be kept private. A very flimsy scheme it was; however, it was immediately executed, and the paper went on accordingly under my name for several months.

At length, a fresh difference arising between my brother and me,

7. *The Dogood Papers* (1722), his first published prose.

8. "I fancy his harsh and tyrannical treatment of me might be a means of impressing me with that aversion to arbitrary power that has stuck to me through my whole life" [Franklin's note].

9. In fact, James Franklin was arrested twice, on different charges; consequently, Benjamin edited the *Courant* for three weeks in June and July, 1722, and again for a week in February, 1723, before his name appeared as ostensible editor on February 11, 1723.

I took upon me to assert my freedom, presuming that he would not venture to produce the new indentures. It was not fair in me to take this advantage, and this I therefore reckon one of the first errata of my life; but the unfairness of it weighed little with me when under the impression of resentment for the blows his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me, though he was otherwise not an ill-natured man; perhaps I was too saucy and provoking.

When he found I would leave him, he took care to prevent my getting employment in any other printing-house of the town, by going round and speaking to every master, who accordingly refused to give me work. I then thought of going to New York, as the nearest place where there was a printer; and I was the rather inclined to leave Boston when I reflected that I had already made myself a little obnoxious to the governing party, and, from the arbitrary proceedings of the Assembly in my brother's case, it was likely I might, if I stayed, soon bring myself into scrapes; and farther, that my indiscreet disputations about religion began to make me pointed at with horror by good people as an infidel or atheist. I determined on the point, but my father now siding with my brother, I was sensible that, if I attempted to go openly, means would be used to prevent me. My friend Collins, therefore, undertook to manage a little for me. He agreed with the captain of a New York sloop for my passage, under the notion of my being a young acquaintance of his, that had got a naughty girl with child, whose friends would compel me to marry her, and therefore I could not appear or come away publicly. So I sold some of my books to raise a little money, was taken on board privately, and as we had a fair wind, in three days I found myself in New York, near three hundred miles from home, a boy of but seventeen, without the least recommendation to, or knowledge of, any person in the place, and with very little money in my pocket.

My inclinations for the sea were by this time worn out, or I might now have gratified them. But, having a trade, and supposing myself a pretty good workman, I offered my service to the printer in the place, old Mr. William Bradford,<sup>1</sup> who had been the first printer in Pennsylvania, but removed from thence upon the quarrel of George Keith. He could give me no employment, having little to do and help enough already; but, says he, "My son<sup>2</sup> at Philadelphia has lately lost his principal hand, Aquila Rose,<sup>3</sup> by death; if you go thither, I believe he may employ you." Philadelphia was one hun-

1. William Bradford, the first Philadelphia printer (1685). In 1692 he supported George Keith in a schismatic attack on Penn's doctrines. In 1693 in New York he became the royal printer, and he founded that colony's first newspaper, the *New York Gazette* (1725).

2. Andrew Bradford (1686-1742), later Franklin's principal rival as a printer.

3. Aquila Rose (1695?-1723). His posthumous *Poems* \* \* \* (1740) survives because Franklin assisted the poet's son in publishing them.

dred miles further; I set out, however, in a boat for Amboy,<sup>4</sup> leaving my chest and things to follow me round by sea. \* \* \*

In the evening I found myself very feverish, and went into bed; but having read somewhere that cold water drank plentifully was good for a fever I followed the prescription, sweat plentifully most of the night; my fever left me, and in the morning, crossing the ferry, I proceeded on my journey on foot, having fifty miles to Burlington, where I was told I should find boats that would carry me the rest of the way to Philadelphia.

It rained very hard all the day; I was thoroughly soaked, and by noon a good deal tired; so I stopped at a poor inn, where I stayed all night, beginning now to wish I had never left home. I cut so miserable a figure, too, that I found, by the questions asked me, I was suspected to be some runaway servant, and in danger of being taken up on that suspicion. However, I proceeded the next day, and got in the evening to an inn, within eight or ten miles of Burlington, kept by one Dr. Brown. \* \* \*

At his house I lay that night, and the next morning reached Burlington, but had the mortification to find that the regular boats were gone a little before my coming, and no other expected to go till Tuesday, this being Saturday; wherefore I returned to an old woman in the town, of whom I had bought gingerbread to eat on the water, and asked her advice. She invited me to lodge at her house till a passage by water should offer; and, being tired with my foot traveling, I accepted the invitation. She, understanding I was a printer, would have had me stay at that town and follow my business, being ignorant of the stock necessary to begin with. She was very hospitable, gave me a dinner of ox-check with great good will, accepting only of a pot of ale in return; and I thought myself fixed till Tuesday should come. However, walking in the evening by the side of the river, a boat came by, which I found was going towards Philadelphia, with several people in her. They took me in, and, as there was no wind, we rowed all the way; and about midnight, not having yet seen the city, some of the company were confident we must have passed it, and would row no farther; the others knew not where we were; so we put towards the shore, got into a creek, landed near an old fence, with the rails of which we made a fire, the night being cold (in October), and there we remained till daylight. Then one of the company knew the place to be Cooper's Creek, a little above Philadelphia,<sup>7</sup> which we saw as soon as we got out of the creek, and arrived there about eight or nine o'clock on the Sunday morn-

4. Perth Amboy, then the coastal capital of New Jersey. From there the shortest route across New Jersey was to Burlington, then capital of West Jersey, where the Delaware River would

provide an easy passage of twenty miles to Philadelphia.

7. Actually on the New Jersey side, in present-day Camden.

ing, and landed at the Market Street wharf.

I have been the more particular in this description of my journey, and shall be so of my first entry into that city, that you may in your mind compare such unlikely beginnings with the figure I have since made there. I was in my working dress, my best clothes being to come round by sea. I was dirty from my journey; my pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings; I knew no soul nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with traveling, rowing, and want of rest; I was very hungry; and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar and about a shilling in copper. The latter I gave the people of the boat for my passage, who at first refused it, on account of my rowing; but I insisted on their taking it, a man being sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps through fear of being thought to have but little.

Then I walked up the street, gazing about, till near the market-house I met a boy with bread. I had made many a meal on bread, and, inquiring where he got it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to, in Second Street, and asked for biscuit, intending such as we had in Boston; but they, it seems, were not made in Philadelphia. Then I asked for a three-penny loaf, and was told they had none such. So, not considering or knowing the difference of money, and the greater cheapness nor the names of his bread, I bade him give me three-penny worth of any sort. He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls. I was surprised at the quantity, but took it, and, having no room in my pockets, walked off with a roll under each arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market Street as far as Fourth Street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father; when she, standing at the door, saw me, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Then I turned and went down Chestnut Street and part of Walnut Street, eating my roll all the way, and, coming round, found myself again at Market Street wharf, near the boat I came in, to which I went for a draught of the river water; and, being filled with one of my rolls, gave the other two to a woman and her child that came down the river in the boat with us, and were waiting to go farther.

Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meeting-house of the Quakers near the market. I sat down among them, and, after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy through labor and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep, and continued so till the meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me. This was, therefore, the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia. \* \* \*



Keimer's printing-house,<sup>8</sup> I found, consisted of an old shattered press, and one small, worn-out font of English,<sup>9</sup> which he was then using himself, composing an elegy on Aquila Rose, before mentioned, an ingenious young man, of excellent character, much respected in the town, clerk of the Assembly, and a pretty poet. Keimer made verses too, but very indifferently. He could not be said to write them, for his manner was to compose them in the types directly out of his head. So there being no copy, but one pair of cases,<sup>1</sup> and the elegy likely to require all the letter, no one could help him. I endeavored to put his press (which he had not yet used, and of which he understood nothing) into order fit to be worked with; and, promising to come and print off his elegy as soon as he should have got it ready, I returned to Bradford's, who gave me a little job to do for the present, and there I lodged and dieted. A few days after, Keimer sent for me to print off the elegy. And now he had got another pair of cases, and a pamphlet to reprint, on which he set me to work. \* \* \*

I began now to have some acquaintance among the young people of the town that were lovers of reading, with whom I spent my evenings very pleasantly; and gaining money by my industry and frugality I lived very agreeably, forgetting Boston as much as I could, and not desiring that any there should know where I resided, except my friend Collins, who was in my secret, and kept it when I wrote to him. At length, an incident happened that sent me back again much sooner than I had intended. I had a brother-in-law, Robert Holmes, master of a sloop that traded between Boston and Delaware. He being at Newcastle, forty miles below Philadelphia, heard there of me, and wrote me a letter mentioning the concern of my friends in Boston at my abrupt departure, assuring me of their good will to me, and that everything would be accommodated to my mind if I would return, to which he exhorted me very earnestly. I wrote an answer to his letter, thanked him for his advice, but stated my reasons for quitting Boston fully and in such a light as to convince him I was not so wrong as he had apprehended.

Sir William Keith,<sup>2</sup> governor of the province, was then at Newcastle, and Captain Holmes, happening to be in company with him when my letter came to hand, spoke to him of me, and showed him the letter. The Governor read it, and seemed surprised when he was

8. Andrew Bradford could not employ him; he accordingly sought work with Bradford's competitor, Samuel Keimer.  
9. The English, or 14-point, type would be oversized for most book and newspaper work.

1. The hand typesetter picked his capitals from boxes in the "upper case," his

small letters from those in the "lower case."

2. Sir William Keith (1680-1749), governor of Pennsylvania (1717-1726), sided with the Assembly and the people; he opposed the Proprietors, who caused his dismissal.

told my age. He said I appeared a young man of promising parts, and therefore should be encouraged; the printers at Philadelphia were wretched ones; and if I would set up there he made no doubt I should succeed; for his part, he would procure me the public business, and do me every other service in his power. This my brother-in-law afterwards told me in Boston, but I knew as yet nothing of it; when, one day, Keimer and I being at work together near the window, we saw the Governor and another gentleman (which proved to be Colonel French of Newcastle), finely dressed, come directly across the street to our house, and heard them at the door.

Keimer ran down immediately, thinking it a visit to him; but the Governor inquired for me, came up, and with a condescension and politeness I had been quite unused to, made me many compliments, desired to be acquainted with me, blamed me kindly for not having made myself known to him when I first came to the place, and would have me away with him to the tavern, where he was going with Colonel French to taste, as he said, some excellent Madeira. I was not a little surprised, and Keimer stared like a pig poisoned. I went, however, with the Governor and Colonel French to a tavern at the corner of Third Street, and over the Madeira he proposed my setting up my business, laid before me the probabilities of success, and both he and Colonel French assured me I should have their interest and influence in procuring the public business of both governments. On my doubting whether my father would assist me in it, Sir William said he would give me a letter to him, in which he would state the advantages, and he did not doubt of prevailing with him. So it was concluded I should return to Boston in the first vessel, with the Governor's letter recommending me to my father. In the mean time the intention was to be kept secret, and I went on working with Keimer as usual, the Governor sending for me now and then to dine with him—a very great honor I thought it—and conversing with me in the most affable, familiar, and friendly manner imaginable.<sup>3</sup> \* \* \*

The sloop putting in at Newport, Rhode Island, I visited my brother John, who had been married and settled there some years. He received me very affectionately, for he always loved me. A friend of his, one Vernon, having some money due to him in Pennsylvania, about thirty-five pounds currency, desired I would receive it for him, and keep it till I had his directions what to remit it in. Accordingly, he gave me an order. This afterwards occasioned me a good deal of uneasiness. \* \* \*

We proceeded to Philadelphia. I received on the way Vernon's

3. In April, 1724, Franklin returned to Boston, but could not win financial backing from his father, who thought him to be too young for the responsi-

bility. His Boston friend John Collins, however, was impressed by his stories and decided to move to Philadelphia.

money, without which we could hardly have finished our journey. Collins wished to be employed in some counting-house; but, whether they discovered his dramming by his breath, or by his behavior, though he had some recommendations, he met with no success in any application, and continued lodging and boarding at the same house with me, and at my expense. Knowing I had that money of Vernon's, he was continually borrowing of me, still promising repayment as soon as he should be in business. At length he had got so much of it that I was distressed to think what I should do in case of being called on to remit it. \* \* \*

The breaking into this money of Vernon's was one of the first great errata of my life; and this affair showed that my father was not much out in his judgment when he supposed me too young to manage business of importance. But Sir William, on reading his letter, said he was too prudent. There was great difference in persons; and discretion did not always accompany years, nor was youth always without it. "And since he will not set you up," says he, "I will do it myself. Give me an inventory of the things necessary to be had from England, and I will send for them. You shall repay me when you are able; I am resolved to have a good printer here, and I am sure you must succeed." This was spoken with such an appearance of cordiality, that I had not the least doubt of his meaning what he said. \* \* \*

I presented him an inventory of a little printing-house, amounting by my computation to about one hundred pounds sterling. He liked it, but asked me if my being on the spot in England to choose the types and see that everything was good of the kind might not be of some advantage. "Then," says he, "when there, you may make acquaintances, and establish correspondences in the bookselling and stationery way." I agreed that this might be advantageous. "Then," says he, "get yourself ready to go with *Annis*," which was the annual ship, and the only one at that time usually passing between London and Philadelphia. But it would be some months before *Annis* sailed, so I continued working with Keimer, fretting about the money Collins had got from me, and in daily apprehensions of being called upon by Vernon, which, however, did not happen for some years after. \* \* \*

My chief acquaintances at this time were Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph,<sup>5</sup> all lovers of reading. The two first were clerks to an eminent scrivener or conveyancer in the town, Charles Brogden; the other was clerk to a merchant. Watson was a pious, sensible young man, of great integrity; the others rather more lax in their principles of religion, particularly Ralph, who, as well as 5. Ralph (died 1762) accompanied Franklin to England. He became known as a neoclassical poet and as collabora-

tor with Henry Fielding on the *Champion*, a periodical; and was author of an authoritative *History of England*.

Collins, had been unsettled by me, for which they both made me suffer. \* \* \*

Ralph, though married, and having one child, had determined to accompany me in this voyage. It was thought he intended to establish a correspondence and obtain goods to sell on commission; but I found afterwards, that through some discontent with his wife's relations he purposed to leave her on their hands and never return again. Having taken leave of my friends, and interchanged some promises with Miss Read, I left Philadelphia in the ship, which anchored at Newcastle.<sup>6</sup> The Governor was there; but when I went to his lodging, the secretary came to me from him with the civillest message in the world, that he could not then see me, being engaged in business of the utmost importance, but should send the letters to me on board, wished me heartily a good voyage and a speedy return, etc. I returned on board a little puzzled, but still not doubting.

Mr. Andrew Hamilton,<sup>7</sup> a famous lawyer of Philadelphia, had taken passage in the same ship for himself and son, and with Mr. Denham, a Quaker merchant, and Messrs. Onion and Russel, masters of an iron work in Maryland, had engaged the great cabin; so that Ralph and I were forced to take up with a berth in the steerage and, none on board knowing us, were considered as ordinary persons. But Mr. Hamilton and his son (it was James, since Governor) returned from Newcastle to Philadelphia, the father being recalled by a great fee to plead for a seized ship; and, just before we sailed, Colonel French coming on board and showing me great respect, I was more taken notice of, and with my friend Ralph invited by the other gentlemen to come into the cabin, there being now room. Accordingly, we removed thither. \* \* \*

When we came into the Channel, the captain kept his word with me, and gave me an opportunity of examining the bag for the Governor's letters. I found none upon which my name was put as under my care \* \* \* and after recollecting and comparing circumstances, I began to doubt his sincerity. I found my friend Denham, and opened the whole affair to him. He let me into Keith's character; told me there was not the least probability that he had written any letters for me; that no one who knew him had the smallest dependence on him; and he laughed at the notion of the Governor's giving me a letter of credit, having, as he said, no credit to give. On my expressing some concern about what I should do, he advised me to endeavor getting some employment in the way of my business.

6. Now New Castle, Delaware; originally a Swedish settlement, and an active port of entry. Delaware and Pennsylvania, both part of the grant to William Penn, remained long under the same governor.

7. Andrew Hamilton (died 1741), whose

defense of John Peter Zenger, publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal*, established the principle of political freedom for the colonial press. His son James, four times governor of Pennsylvania before 1773, was a strongly conservative Tory.

"Among the printers here," says he, "you will improve yourself, and when you return to America, you will set up to greater advantage." \* \* \*

Ralph and I were inseparable companions. We took lodgings together in Little Britain<sup>1</sup> at three shillings and sixpence a week—as much as we could then afford. He found some relations, but they were poor and unable to assist him. He now let me know his intentions of remaining in London, and that he never meant to return to Philadelphia. He had brought no money with him, the whole he could muster having been expended in paying his passage. I had fifteen pistoles;<sup>2</sup> so he borrowed occasionally of me to subsist while he was looking out for business. \* \* \*

I immediately got into work at Palmer's,<sup>3</sup> then a famous printing-house in Bartholomew Close, and here I continued near a year. I was pretty diligent, but spent with Ralph a good deal of my earnings in going to plays and other places of amusement. We had together consumed all my pistoles, and now just rubbed on from hand to mouth. He seemed quite to forget his wife and child, and I, by degrees, my engagements with Miss Read, to whom I never wrote more than one letter, and that was to let her know I was not likely soon to return. This was another of the great errata of my life, which I should wish to correct if I were to live it over again. In fact, by our expenses, I was constantly kept unable to pay my passage.

At Palmer's I was employed in composing for the second edition of Wollaston's *Religion of Nature*.<sup>3</sup> Some of his reasonings not appearing to me well founded, I wrote a little metaphysical piece in which I made remarks on them. It was entitled *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain*. I inscribed it to my friend Ralph; I printed a small number. It occasioned my being more considered by Mr. Palmer as a young man of some ingenuity, though he seriously expostulated with me upon the principles of my pamphlet, which to him appeared abominable. My printing this pamphlet was another erratum. While I lodged in Little Britain, I made an acquaintance with one Wilcox, a bookseller, whose shop was at the next door. He had an immense collection of second-hand books.

8. In the heart of London, near St. Paul's.

9. The pistole, or quarter doubloon, a Spanish coin, was then worth eighteen shillings in English currency.

2. Samuel Palmer (died 1732) was a prominent printer. Bartholomew Close was associated with the shops and lodgings of publishers, just as the Temple housed the legal profession. Both were in the center of London.

3. *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (1722), by William Wollaston (1660-1724). According to Van Doren (*Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 51, 80), the book

influenced his Deism. Wollaston argued that judgments of good and bad refer not only to religious revelation, but to a principle in Nature itself. Franklin's *Dissertation* \* \* \* (1725), mentioned here, was a rebuttal, arguing that there are no natural vices or virtues—men simply respond to "necessity" on the basis of pain or pleasure. He soon abandoned this extreme materialism in favor of an eclectic Deism similar to Wollaston's, represented in his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*, written in 1728 as his private creed.

Circulating libraries were not then in use; but we agreed that, on certain reasonable terms, which I have now forgotten, I might take, read, and return any of his books. This I esteemed a great advantage, and I made as much use of it as I could. \* \* \*

I now began to think of getting a little money beforehand; and expecting better work I left Palmer's to work at Watts's,<sup>8</sup> near Lincoln's Inn Fields, a still greater printing-house. Here I continued all the rest of my stay in London. \* \* \*

At Watts's printing-house I contracted an acquaintance with an ingenious young man, one Wygate, who, having wealthy relations, had been better educated than most printers; was a tolerable Latinist, spoke French, and loved reading. I taught him and a friend of his to swim at twice going into the river, and they soon became good swimmers. They introduced me to some gentlemen from the country who went to Chelsea<sup>9</sup> by water to see the College and Don Saltero's curiosities. In our return, at the request of the company, whose curiosity Wygate had excited, I stripped and leaped into the river, and swam from near Chelsea to Blackfriar's, performing on the way many feats of activity, both upon and under water, that surprised and pleased those to whom they were novelties.

I had from a child been ever delighted with this exercise, had studied and practiced all Thevenot's<sup>1</sup> motions and positions, added some of my own, aiming at the graceful and easy as well as the useful. All these I took this occasion of exhibiting to the company, and was much flattered by their admiration; and Wygate, who was desirous of becoming a master, grew more and more attached to me on that account, as well as from the similarity of our studies. He at length proposed to me traveling all over Europe together, supporting ourselves everywhere by working at our business. I was once inclined to it; but, mentioning it to my good friend Mr. Denham, with whom I often spent an hour when I had leisure, he dissuaded me from it, advising me to think only of returning to Pennsylvania, which he was now about to do.

I must record one trait of this good man's character. He had formerly been in business at Bristol, but failed in debt to a number of people, compounded, and went to America. There, by a close application to business as a merchant, he acquired a plentiful fortune in a few years. Returning to England in the ship with me, he invited his old creditors to an entertainment, at which he thanked

8. According to Van Doren (*Benjamin Franklin*, p. 53), James Watts (died 1763) employed fifty printers; his establishment was a good school for Franklin.

9. Now a borough of London, then a resort for boats up the Thames. The old College there had become a veteran's

hospital; Don Saltero, mentioned by Steele in the *Tatler*, maintained there a coffeehouse and museum patronized by scientific and literary London.

1. Melchissédéc Thevenot's illustrated *Art of Swimming* (in French, 1695) was still the authority.

them for the easy composition they had favored him with, and, when they expected nothing but the treat, every man at the first remove found under his plate an order on a banker for the full amount of the unpaid remainder with interest.

He now told me he was about to return to Philadelphia, and should carry over a great quantity of goods in order to open a store there. He proposed to take me over as his clerk, to keep his books, in which he would instruct me, copy his letters, and attend the store. He added that as soon as I should be acquainted with mercantile business, he would promote me by sending me with a cargo of flour and bread, etc., to the West Indies, and procure me commissions from others which would be profitable; and if I managed well would establish me handsomely. The thing pleased me; for I was grown tired of London, remembered with pleasure the happy months I had spent in Pennsylvania, and wished again to see it; therefore I immediately agreed on the terms of fifty pounds a year, Pennsylvania money; less, indeed, than my present gettings as a compositor, but affording a better prospect. \* \* \*

Mr. Denham took a store in Water Street, where we opened our goods; I attended the business diligently, studied accounts, and grew, in a little time, expert at selling. We lodged and boarded together; he counseled me as a father, having a sincere regard for me. I respected and loved him, and we might have gone on together very happily; but, in the beginning of February, 1726/7,<sup>4</sup> when I had just passed my twenty-first year, we both were taken ill. My distemper was a pleurisy, which very nearly carried me off. I suffered a good deal, gave up the point in my own mind, and was rather disappointed when I found myself recovering, regretting, in some degree, that I must now, some time or other, have all that disagreeable work to do over again. I forget what his distemper was; it held him a long time, and at length carried him off. He left me a small legacy in a nuncupative will, as a token of his kindness for me, and he left me once more to the wide world; for the store was taken into the care of his executors, and my employment under him ended.

My brother-in-law, Holmes, being now at Philadelphia, advised my return to my business; and Keimer tempted me, with an offer of large wages by the year, to come and take the management of his printing-house, that he might better attend his stationer's shop. I had heard a bad character of him in London from his wife and her friends, and was not fond of having any more to do with him. I tried for farther employment as a merchant's clerk; but not readily meeting with any I closed again with Keimer. \* \* \*

I soon perceived that the intention of engaging me at wages so

4. In the Old Style (Julian) calendar, replaced in 1752 by the New Style (Gregorian) calendar, the year began on

March 25. In the dual reckoning, Franklin was twenty-one on January 6/17, 1726/7.

much higher than he had been used to give was to have [his] raw, cheap hands formed through me; and, as soon as I had instructed them, then they being all articed to him, he should be able to do without me. I went on, however, very cheerfully, put his printing-house in order, which had been in great confusion, and brought his hands by degrees to mind their business and to do it better. \* \* \*

But, however serviceable I might be, I found that my services became every day of less importance, as the other hands improved in the business; and when Keimer paid my second quarter's wages, he let me know that he felt them too heavy, and thought I should make an abatement. He grew by degrees less civil, put on more of the master, frequently found fault, was captious, and seemed ready for an outbreking. I went on, nevertheless, with a good deal of patience, thinking that his encumbered circumstances were partly the cause. At length a trifle snapped our connection; for a great noise happening near the courthouse, I put my head out of the window to see what was the matter. Keimer, being in the street, looked up and saw me, called out to me in a loud voice and angry tone to mind my business, adding some reproachful words, that nettled me the more for their publicity, all the neighbors who were looking out on the same occasion being witnesses how I was treated. He came up immediately into the printing-house, continued the quarrel, high words passed on both sides, he gave me the quarter's warning we had stipulated, expressing a wish that he had not been obliged to so long a warning. I told him his wish was unnecessary, for I would leave him that instant; and so, taking my hat, walked out of doors, desiring Meredith, whom I saw below, to take care of some things I left, and bring them to my lodging.

Meredith came accordingly in the evening, when we talked my affair over. He had conceived a great regard for me, and was very unwilling that I should leave the house while he remained in it. He dissuaded me from returning to my native country, which I began to think of; he reminded me that Keimer was in debt for all he possessed; that his creditors began to be uneasy; that he kept his shop miserably, sold often without profit for ready money, and often trusted without keeping accounts; that he must therefore fail, which would make a vacancy I might profit of. I objected my want of money. He then let me know that his father had a high opinion of me, and, from some discourse that had passed between them, he was sure would advance money to set us up, if I would enter into partnership with him. "My time," says he, "will be out with Keimer in the spring; by that time we may have our press and types in from London. I am sensible I am no workman; if you like it, your skill in the business shall be set against the stock I furnish, and we will share the profits equally."



The proposal was agreeable, and I consented; his father was in town and approved of it; the more as he saw I had great influence with his son, had prevailed on him to abstain long from dram-drinking, and he hoped might break him off that wretched habit entirely, when we came to be so closely connected. \* \* \*

We had not been long returned to Philadelphia before the new types arrived from London. We settled with Keimer, and left him by his consent before he heard of it. We found a house to hire near the market, and took it. To lessen the rent, which was then but twenty-four pounds a year, though I have since known it to let for seventy, we took in Thomas Godfrey,<sup>9</sup> a glazier, and his family, who were to pay a considerable part of it to us, and we to board with them. We had scarce opened our letters and put our press in order, before George House, an acquaintance of mine, brought a countryman to us, whom he had met in the street inquiring for a printer. All our cash was now expended in the variety of particulars we had been obliged to procure, and this countryman's five shillings, being our first-fruits, and coming so seasonably, gave me more pleasure than any crown<sup>1</sup> I have since earned; and from the gratitude I felt towards House, has made me often more ready than perhaps I should otherwise have been to assist young beginners. \* \* \*

I should have mentioned before that in the autumn of the preceding year, I had formed most of my ingenious acquaintance into a club of mutual improvement, which we called the Junto.<sup>2</sup> We met on Friday evenings. The rules that I drew up required that every member, in his turn, should produce one or more queries on any point of morals, politics, or natural philosophy, to be discussed by the company; and once in three months produce and read an essay of his own writing, on any subject he pleased. Our debates were to be under the direction of a president, and to be conducted in the sincere spirit of inquiry after truth, without fondness for dispute, or desire of victory; and, to prevent warmth, all expressions of positiveness in opinions, or direct contradiction, were after some time made contraband, and prohibited under small pecuniary penalties.

The first members were Joseph Breintnal, a copier of deeds for the scriveners, a good-natured, friendly, middle-aged man, a great lover of poetry, reading all he could meet with, and writing some that was tolerable; very ingenious in many little nicknackeries, and of sensible conversation. Thomas Godfrey, a self-taught mathematician, great in his way, and afterwards inventor of what is now called

9. Thomas Godfrey, later a member of the Junto mentioned in the following paragraph, a mathematician and the inventor of a quadrant long standard for navigation, was the father of Thomas Godfrey (1736-1763), who wrote the first American tragedy, *The Prince of*

*Parthia*, produced 1767.

1. Five shillings.

2. A faction or cabal, often secret (from the Spanish *junta*). This is the first American literary society of any duration; as Franklin shows, a number of its members achieved high distinction.

Hadley's quadrant. But he knew little out of his way, and was not a pleasing companion; as, like most great mathematicians I have met with, he expected universal precision in everything said, or was forever denying or distinguishing upon trifles, to the disturbance of all conversation. He soon left us. Nicholas Scull, a surveyor, afterwards surveyor-general, who loved books, and sometimes made a few verses. William Parsons, bred a shoemaker, but loving reading, had acquired a considerable share of mathematics, which he first studied with a view to astrology, that he afterwards laughed at. He also became surveyor-general. William Maugridge, a joiner,<sup>3</sup> a most exquisite mechanic, and a solid, sensible man. Hugh Meredith, Stephen Potts, and George Webb I have characterized before. Robert Grace, a young gentleman of some fortune, generous, lively, and witty; a lover of punning and of his friends. And William Coleman, then a merchant's clerk, about my age, who had the coolest, clearest head, the best heart, and the exactest morals of almost any man I ever met with. He became afterwards a merchant of great note, and one of our provincial judges. Our friendship continued without interruption to his death, upwards of forty years. And the club continued almost as long, and was the best school of philosophy and politics that then existed in the province; for our queries, which were read the week preceding their discussion, put us on reading with attention upon the several subjects, that we might speak more to the purpose, and here, too, we acquired better habits of conversation, everything being studied in our rules which might prevent our disgusting each other. From hence the long continuance of the club, which I shall have frequent occasion to speak farther of hereafter.

But my giving this account of it here is to show something of the interest I had, every one of these exerting themselves in recommending business to us. Breintnal particularly procured us from the Quakers the printing forty sheets of their history,<sup>4</sup> the rest being to be done by Keimer; and upon this we worked exceeding hard, for the price was low. It was a folio, pro patria size, in pica, with long primer notes. I composed of it a sheet a day, and Meredith worked it off at press; it was often eleven at night, and sometimes later, before I had finished my distribution for the next day's work, for the little jobs sent in by our other friends now and then put us back. But so determined I was to continue doing a sheet a day of the folio that one night, when, having imposed my forms, I thought my day's work over, one of them by accident was broken, and two pages reduced to pi,<sup>5</sup> I immediately distributed and composed it over again

3. Cabinetmaker.

4. By William Sewel (or Sewell), a Dutch Quaker: *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers* (Amsterdam, 1717; London, 1725; third edition, in English translation, Philadelphia. Sam-

uel Keimer, 1728).

5. That is, he composed and locked up the type into the page forms (chases) for printing. The accident made a jumble (pi) of them (cf. "pied," meaning "disordered" printing).

before I went to bed. And this industry, visible to our neighbors, began to give us character and credit. \* \* \*

George Webb, who had found a female friend that lent him wherewith to purchase his time of Keimer, now came to offer himself as a journeyman to us. We could not then employ him; but I foolishly let him know, as a secret, that I soon intended to begin a newspaper, and might then have work for him. My hopes of success, as I told him, were founded on this, that the then only newspaper,<sup>6</sup> printed by Bradford, was a paltry thing, wretchedly managed, no way entertaining, and yet was profitable to him; I therefore thought a good paper could scarcely fail of good encouragement. I requested Webb not to mention it; but he told it to Keimer, who immediately, to be beforehand with me, published proposals for printing one himself,<sup>7</sup> on which Webb was to be employed. I resented this; and to counteract them, as I could not yet begin our paper, I wrote several pieces of entertainment for Bradford's paper, under the title of the Busy Body, which Breintnal continued some months. By this means the attention of the public was fixed on that paper, and Keimer's proposals, which we burlesqued and ridiculed, were disregarded. He began his paper, however, and after carrying it on three quarters of a year, with at most only ninety subscribers, he offered it me for a trifle; and I, having been ready some time to go on with it, took it in hand directly; and it proved in a few years extremely profitable to me. \* \* \*

About this time<sup>8</sup> there was a cry among the people for more paper money, only fifteen thousand pounds being extant in the province, and that soon to be sunk. The wealthy inhabitants opposed any addition, being against all paper currency, from an apprehension that it would depreciate, as it had done in New England, to the prejudice of all creditors. We had discussed this point in our Junto, where I was on the side of an addition, being persuaded that the first small sum struck in 1723 had done much good by increasing the trade, employment, and number of inhabitants in the province, since I now saw all the old houses inhabited, and many new ones building: whereas I remembered well, that when I first walked about the streets of Philadelphia, eating my roll, I saw most of the houses in Walnut Street, between Second and Front streets, with bills on their doors to be let; and many likewise in Chestnut Street and other streets, which made me then think the inhabitants of the city were desert-

6. *American Weekly Mercury* (1719-1746). As Franklin explains, six of his "Busy Body Papers" in the *Mercury* (1729) "burlesqued and ridiculed" Keimer's new *Gazette* until Franklin was able to buy it himself.

7. Samuel Keimer published the first number of *The Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences and Pennsylvania*

*Gazette* on December 24, 1728. Franklin bought him out "for a trifle," and assumed its publication as *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, dated September 25-October 2, 1729. It made him a fortune. In 1766 he relinquished it to David Hall, his partner; it continued publication until 1815.

8. The winter of 1728-1729.

ing it one after another.

Our debates possessed me so fully of the subject, that I wrote and printed an anonymous pamphlet<sup>9</sup> on it, entitled *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency*. It was well received by the common people in general; but the rich men disliked it, for it increased and strengthened the clamor for more money; and they happening to have no writers among them that were able to answer it, their opposition slackened, and the point was carried by a majority in the House. My friends there, who conceived I had been of some service, thought fit to reward me by employing me in printing the money, a very profitable job and a great help to me.<sup>1</sup> This was another advantage gained by my being able to write.

The utility of this currency became by time and experience so evident as never afterwards to be much disputed; so that it grew soon to fifty-five thousand pounds, and in 1739 to eighty thousand pounds, since which it arose during war to upwards of three hundred and fifty thousand pounds—trade, building, and inhabitants all the while increasing—though I now think there are limits beyond which the quantity may be hurtful.

I soon after obtained through my friend Hamilton the printing of the Newcastle<sup>2</sup> paper money, another profitable job as I then thought it, small things appearing great to those in small circumstances; and these, to me, were really great advantages, as they were great encouragements. He procured for me, also, the printing of the laws and votes of that government, which continued in my hands as long as I followed the business. \* \* \*

I began now gradually to pay off the debt I was under for the printing-house. In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all *appearances* of the contrary. I dressed plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out afishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal; and, to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores through the streets on a wheelbarrow. Thus being esteemed an industrious, thriving young man, and paying duly for what I bought, the merchants who imported stationery solicited my custom; others proposed supplying me with books; I went on swimmingly. In the meantime, Keimer's credit and business declining daily, he was at last forced to sell his printing-house to satisfy his creditors.<sup>3</sup> He went to Barbados, and there lived some years in very

9. Dated April 3, 1729.

1. Franklin had bought out his partner, Hugh Meredith, in July, 1730, having borrowed money for the transaction.

2. *I.e.*, for Delaware.

3. In 1729, according to Van Doren, Keimer's apprentice, David Harry, took over his print shop, but he, too, failed in a few months.

poor circumstances. \* \* \*

There remained now no competitor with me at Philadelphia but the old one, Bradford, who was rich and easy, did a little printing now and then by straggling hands, but was not very anxious about it. However, as he kept the post-office, it was imagined he had better opportunities of obtaining news; his paper was thought a better distributor of advertisements than mine, and therefore had many more, which was a profitable thing to him, and a disadvantage to me; for, though I did indeed receive and send papers by the post, yet the public opinion was otherwise, for what I did send was by bribing the riders, who took them privately, Bradford being unkind enough to forbid it, which occasioned some resentment on my part; and I thought so meanly of him for it, that when I afterward came into his situation<sup>4</sup> I took care never to imitate it. \* \* \*

A friendly correspondence as neighbors and old acquaintances had continued between me and Mrs. Read's family, who all had a regard for me from the time of my first lodging in their house. I was often invited there and consulted in their affairs, wherein I sometimes was of service. I pitied poor Miss Read's unfortunate situation, who was generally dejected, seldom cheerful, and avoided company. I considered my giddiness and inconstancy when in London as in a great degree the cause of her unhappiness, though the mother was good enough to think the fault more her own than mine, as she had prevented our marrying before I went thither, and persuaded the other match in my absence. Our mutual affection was revived, but there were now great objections to our union. That match was indeed looked upon as invalid, a preceding wife being said to be living in England; but this could not easily be proved, because of the distance; and though there was a report of his death, it was not certain. Then, though it should be true, he had left many debts, which his successor might be called upon to pay. We ventured, however, over all these difficulties, and I took her to wife, September 1st, 1730. None of the inconveniences happened that we had apprehended; she proved a good and faithful helpmate, assisted me much by attending the shop; we throve together, and have ever mutually endeavored to make each other happy. Thus I corrected that great erratum as well as I could. \* \* \*

And now I set on foot my first project of a public nature, that for a subscription library. I drew up the proposals, got them put into form by our great scrivener, Brockden, and, by the help of my friends in the Junto, procured fifty subscribers of forty shillings each to begin with, and ten shillings a year for fifty years, the term our company

4. Franklin became Deputy Postmaster-General for all the colonies in 1753. He required a fee for the carriage of news-

papers, and made the service available to all publishers.

was to continue.<sup>5</sup> We afterwards obtained a charter, the company being increased to one hundred. This was the mother of all the North American subscription libraries, now so numerous. It is become a great thing itself, and continually increasing. These libraries have improved the general conversation of the Americans, made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps have contributed in some degree to the stand so generally made throughout the colonies in defence of their privileges.<sup>6</sup> \* \* \*

This library afforded me the means of improvement by constant study, for which I set apart an hour or two each day, and thus repaired in some degree the loss of the learned education my father once intended for me. Reading was the only amusement I allowed myself. I spent no time in taverns, games, or frolics of any kind; and my industry in my business continued as indefatigable as it was necessary. I was indebted for my printing-house; I had a young family coming on to be educated, and I had to contend with, for business, two printers who were established in the place before me. My circumstances, however, grew daily easier. My original habits of frugality continuing, and my father having, among his instructions to me when a boy, frequently repeated a proverb of Solomon,<sup>7</sup> "Seest thou a man diligent in his calling; he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," I from thence considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinction, which encouraged me, though I did not think that I should ever literally *stand before kings*, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before *five*, and even had the honor of sitting down with one—the King of Denmark—to dinner. \* \* \*

It was about this time I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely

5. Founded in 1731, this Library Company of Philadelphia is still in existence, housing an important collection of early Americana.

6. The first manuscript, dated 1771, ends here. It is followed by a brief correspondence, dated 1783, in which

friends urge him to complete his autobiography. The third section, which is given in part below, is headed "Continuation of the Account of my Life, begun at Passy, near Paris, 1784."

7. Proverbs xxii: 29.

virtuous was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct. For this purpose I therefore contrived the following method.

In the various enumerations of the moral virtues I had met with in my reading, I found the catalogue more or less numerous, as different writers included more or fewer ideas under the same name. Temperance, for example, was by some confined to eating and drinking, while by others it was extended to mean the moderating every other pleasure, appetite, inclination, or passion, bodily or mental, even to our avarice and ambition. I proposed to myself, for the sake of clearness, to use rather more names, with fewer ideas annexed to each, than a few names with more ideas; and I included under thirteen names of virtues all that at that time occurred to me as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept, which fully expressed the extent I gave to its meaning.

These names of virtues, with their precepts, were:

1. **TEMPERANCE.** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. **SILENCE.** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. **ORDER.** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. **RESOLUTION.** Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. **FRUGALITY.** Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; *i.e.*, waste nothing.
6. **INDUSTRY.** Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. **SINCERITY.** Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. **JUSTICE.** Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. **MODERATION.** Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. **CLEANLINESS.** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.
11. **TRANQUILLITY.** Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. **CHASTITY.** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. **HUMILITY.** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

My intention being to acquire the *habitude* of all these virtues, I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone through the thirteen; and, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arranged them with that view, as they stand above. *Temperance* first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquired and established, *Silence* would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improved in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtained rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company, I gave *Silence* the second place. This and the next, *Order*, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. *Resolution*, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent virtues; *Frugality* and *Industry* freeing me from my remaining debt, and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of *Sincerity* and *Justice*, etc., etc. Conceiving then, that, agreeably to the advice of Pythagoras<sup>8</sup> in his Golden Verses, daily examination would be necessary, I contrived the following method for conducting that examination.

I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I ruled each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I crossed these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.

I determined to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively. Thus, in the first week, my great guard was to avoid even the least offence against *Temperance*, leaving the other virtues to their ordinary chance, only marking every evening the faults of the day. Thus, if in the first week I could keep my first line, marked T, clear of spots, I supposed the habit of that virtue so much strengthened, and its opposite weakened, that I might venture extending my attention to include the next, and for the following week keep

8. Influential Greek philosopher-mathematician (fl. 530 B.C.), whose teachings survive only in the traditions of his

disciples. Franklin refers to the Pythagorean discipline of "passionate intellectual contemplation."



both lines clear of spots. Proceeding thus to the last, I could go through a course complete in thirteen weeks, and four courses in a year. And like him who, having a garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad herbs at once, which would exceed his reach and his strength, but works on one of the beds at a time, and, having accomplished the first, proceeds to a second, so I should have, I hoped, the encouraging pleasure of seeing on my pages the progress I made in virtue, by clearing successively my lines of their spots, till in the end, by a number of courses, I should be happy in viewing a clean book, after a thirteen weeks' daily examination.

Form of the pages.

TEMPERANCE.							
EAT NOT TO DULNESS; DRINK NOT TO ELEVATION.							
	S.	M.	T.	W.	T.	F.	S.
T.							
S.	*	*		*		*	
O.	**	*	*		*	*	*
R.			*			*	
F.		*			*		
I.			*				
S.							
J.							
M.							
C.							
T.							
C.							
H.							

\* \* \*

The precept of *Order* requiring that *every part of my business should have its allotted time*, one page in my little book contained the following scheme of employment for the twenty-four hours of a natural day.

<p>THE MORNING.</p> <p><i>Question.</i> What good shall I do this day?</p>	{	5	Rise, wash and address
		6	<i>Powerful Goodness!</i> <sup>9</sup> Contrive day's business, and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study, and breakfast.
		7	
	{	8	Work.
		9	
		10	
		11	
<p>NOON.</p> <p><i>Question.</i> What good have I done to-day?</p>	{	12	Read, or overlook my ac-
		1	counts, and dine.
	{	2	Work.
		3	
		4	
		5	
		6	Put things in their places.
	{	7	Supper. Music or diversion,
		8	or conversation. Examination of the day.
		9	
<p>NIGHT.</p>	{	10	Sleep.
		11	
		12	
		1	
		2	
		3	
		4	

I entered upon the execution of this plan for self-examination, and continued it with occasional intermissions for some time. I was surprised to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined; but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish. To avoid the trouble of renewing now and then my little book, which, by scraping out the marks on the paper of old faults to make room for new ones in a new course, became full of holes, I transferred my tables and precepts to the ivory leaves of a memorandum book, on which the lines were drawn with red ink, that made a durable stain, and on those lines I marked my faults with a black-lead pencil, which marks I could easily wipe out with a wet sponge. After a while

9. Franklin's daily prayer, prefixed to his "tables of examinations," was as follows: "O powerful Goodness! bountiful Father! merciful Guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my

truest interest. Strengthen my resolutions to perform what that wisdom dictates. Accept my kind offices to Thy other children as the only return in my power for Thy continual favours to me."

I went through one course only in a year, and afterward only one in several years, till at length I omitted them entirely, being employed in voyages and business abroad, with a multiplicity of affairs that interfered; but I always carried my little book with me. \* \* \*

My list of virtues contained at first but twelve; but a Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud; that my pride showed itself frequently in conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather insolent, of which he convinced me by mentioning several instances; I determined endeavoring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added *Humility* to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word. \* \* \*

In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as *pride*. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.<sup>1</sup> \* \* \*

In 1732 I first published my almanac,<sup>2</sup> under the name of *Richard Saunders*; it was continued by me about twenty-five years, commonly called *Poor Richard's Almanack*. I endeavored to make it both entertaining and useful, and it accordingly came to be in such demand that I reaped considerable profit from it, vending annually near ten thousand. And observing that it was generally read, scarce any neighborhood in the province being without it, I considered it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books; I therefore filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality, as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want, to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, *it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright*.

These proverbs, which contained the wisdom of many ages and nations, I assembled and formed into a connected discourse prefixed to the Almanac of 1757, as the harangue of a wise old man to the people attending an auction.<sup>3</sup> The bringing all these scattered counsels thus into a focus enabled them to make greater impression. The piece, being universally approved, was copied in all the newspapers.

1. "Thus far written at Passy, 1784" [Franklin's note]. Then, beginning a new manuscript, Franklin wrote: "I am now about to write at home [Philadelphia], August, 1788, but cannot have the help expected from my papers, many of them being lost in the war. \* \* \*" The selections following describe some of the practical projects, from 1731 to

1753, which increased his reputation prior to his call to highest national service in the period of the Revolution.

2. *Poor Richard's Almanack*. He published it from 1733 to 1758, then sold it. See the selections in this volume, immediately following the *Autobiography*.

3. "The Way to Wealth"; included in this volume.

of the continent; reprinted in Britain on a broadside, to be stuck up in houses; two translations were made of it in French, and great numbers bought by the clergy and gentry, to distribute gratis among their poor parishioners and tenants. In Pennsylvania, as it discouraged useless expense in foreign superfluities, some thought it had its share of influence in producing that growing plenty of money which was observable for several years after its publication. \* \* \*

In 1739 arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr. Whitefield,<sup>4</sup> who had made himself remarkable there as an itinerant preacher. He was at first permitted to preach in some of our churches; but the clergy taking a dislike to him soon refused him their pulpits, and he was obliged to preach in the fields. The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much they admired and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them they were naturally *half beasts and half devils*. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.

And it being found inconvenient to assemble in the open air, subject to its inclemencies, the building of a house to meet in was no sooner proposed, and persons appointed to receive contributions, but sufficient sums were soon received to procure the ground and erect the building, which was one hundred feet long and seventy broad, about the size of Westminster Hall; and the work was carried on with such spirit as to be finished in a much shorter time than could have been expected.<sup>5</sup> Both house and ground were vested in trustees, expressly for the use of any preacher of any religious persuasion who might desire to say something to the people at Philadelphia; the design in building not being to accommodate any particular sect, but the inhabitants in general; so that even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service. \* \* \*

I had, on the whole, abundant reason to be satisfied with my being established in Pennsylvania. There were, however, two things that I regretted, there being no provision for defense, nor for a complete

4. George Whitefield (1714–1770), a British evangelist, was associated with the founding of the Methodist denomination, but split from the Wesleys on theological grounds, to become the leader of the Calvinistic Methodists. In his early American pilgrimages (1738–41) he became an evangelist of the “Great

Awakening” (cf. the headnote to Jonathan Edwards).

5. Then called the New Building, it was used before completion (1739) for Whitefield’s audiences, and later housed the Charity School, Academy, and College of Philadelphia (the University of Pennsylvania).

education of youth; no militia, nor any college. I therefore, in 1743, drew up a proposal for establishing an academy; and at that time, thinking the Reverend Mr. Peters,<sup>7</sup> who was out of employ, a fit person to superintend such an institution, I communicated the project to him; but he, having more profitable views in the service of the proprietaries, which succeeded, declined the undertaking; and, not knowing another at that time suitable for such a trust, I let the scheme lie a while dormant. I succeeded better the next year, 1744, in proposing and establishing a Philosophical Society.<sup>8</sup> The paper I wrote for that purpose will be found among my writings, when collected. \* \* \*

Peace being concluded, and the association business therefore at an end, I turned my thoughts again to the affair of establishing an academy. The first step I took was to associate in the design a number of active friends, of whom the Junto furnished a good part; the next was to write and publish a pamphlet, entitled *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*.<sup>9</sup> This I distributed among the principal inhabitants gratis; and as soon as I could suppose their minds a little prepared by the perusal of it, I set on foot a subscription for opening and supporting an academy; it was to be paid in quotas yearly for five years; by so dividing it, I judged the subscription might be larger, and I believe it was so, amounting to no less, if I remember right, than five thousand pounds.

In the introduction to these proposals, I stated their publication, not as an act of mine, but of some *public-spirited gentlemen*, avoiding as much as I could, according to my usual rule, the presenting myself to the public as the author of any scheme for their benefit.

The subscribers, to carry the project into immediate execution, chose out of their number twenty-four trustees, and appointed Mr. Francis, then attorney-general, and myself to draw up constitutions for the government of the academy; which being done and signed, a house was hired, masters engaged, and the schools opened, I think, in the same year, 1749.

The scholars increasing fast, the house was soon found too small, and we were looking out for a piece of ground, properly situated, with intention to build, when Providence threw into our way a large house ready built, which, with a few alterations, might well serve our purpose. This was the building before mentioned, erected by the hearers of Mr. Whitefield, and was obtained for us in the fol-

7. Richard Peters had been Rector of Christ's Church, Philadelphia, and was expecting appointment as Secretary of the colony.

8. The American Philosophical Society (1743- ), first learned scientific society in North America. Its first three presidents were Franklin, David Rittenhouse, and Thomas Jefferson.

9. This pamphlet, which appeared in 1749, made the proposal, then radical, for college education on a secular basis, free from ecclesiastical concerns and denominational bias. It carried over the spirit of the "Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge" (1743) which he mentions in the preceding paragraph.

lowing manner.

It is to be noted that the contributions to this building being made by people of different sects, care was taken in the nomination of trustees, in whom the building and ground was to be vested, that a predominancy should not be given to any sect, lest in time that predominancy might be a means of appropriating the whole to the use of such sect, contrary to the original intention. It was therefore that one of each sect was appointed, viz., one Church-of-England man, one Presbyterian, one Baptist, one Moravian, etc.; those, in case of vacancy by death, were to fill it by election from among the contributors. The Moravian happened not to please his colleagues, and on his death they resolved to have no other of that sect. The difficulty then was, how to avoid having two of some other sect, by means of the new choice.

Several persons were named, and for that reason not agreed to. At length one mentioned me, with the observation that I was merely an honest man, and of no sect at all, which prevailed with them to choose me. The enthusiasm which existed when the house was built had long since abated, and its trustees had not been able to procure fresh contributions for paying the ground-rent and discharging some other debts the building had occasioned, which embarrassed them greatly. Being now a member of both sets of trustees, that for the building and that for the academy, I had a good opportunity of negotiating with both, and brought them finally to an agreement, by which the trustees for the building were to cede it to those of the academy, the latter undertaking to discharge the debt, to keep forever open in the building a large hall for occasional preachers, according to the original intention, and maintain a free school for the instruction of poor children. Writings were accordingly drawn, and on paying the debts the trustees of the academy were put in possession of the premises; and by dividing the great and lofty hall into stories, and different rooms above and below for the several schools, and purchasing some additional ground, the whole was soon made fit for our purpose, and the scholars removed into the building. The care and trouble of agreeing with the workmen, purchasing materials, and superintending the work, fell upon me; and I went through it the more cheerfully, as it did not then interfere with my private business, having the year before taken a very able, industrious, and honest partner, Mr. David Hall, with whose character I was well acquainted, as he had worked for me four years. He took off my hands all care of the printing-office, paying me punctually my share of the profits. This partnership continued eighteen years, successfully for us both.

The trustees of the academy, after a while, were incorporated by a charter from the governor; their funds were increased by contribu-

tions in Britain and grants of land from the proprietaries, to which the Assembly has since made considerable addition; and thus was established the present University of Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> I have been continued one of its trustees from the beginning, now near forty years, and have had the very great pleasure of seeing a number of the youth who have received their education in it distinguished by their improved abilities, serviceable in public stations, and ornaments to their country. \* \* \*

Before I proceed in relating the part I had in public affairs \* \* \* , it may not be amiss here to give some account of the rise and progress of my philosophical reputation.

In 1746, being at Boston, I met there with a Dr. Spence, who was lately arrived from Scotland and showed me some electric experiments. They were imperfectly performed, as he was not very expert; but, being on a subject quite new to me, they equally surprised and pleased me. Soon after my return to Philadelphia, our library company received from Mr. P. Collinson,<sup>2</sup> Fellow of the Royal Society of London, a present of a glass tube, with some account of the use of it in making such experiments. I eagerly seized the opportunity of repeating what I had seen at Boston; and by much practice, acquired great readiness in performing those, also, which we had an account of from England, adding a number of new ones. I say much practice, for my house was continually full for some time with people who came to see these new wonders. \* \* \*

Obliged as we were to Mr. Collinson for his present of the tube, etc., I thought it right he should be informed of our success in using it, and wrote him several letters containing accounts of our experiments. He got them read in the Royal Society, where they were not at first thought worth so much notice as to be printed in their *Transactions*. One paper, which I wrote for Mr. Kinnersley on the sameness of lightning with electricity, I sent to Dr. Mitchell,<sup>4</sup> an acquaintance of mine, and one of the members also of that society, who wrote me word that it had been read, but was laughed at by the connoisseurs. The papers, however, being shown to Dr. Fothergill,<sup>5</sup> he thought them of too much value to be stifled, and

1. Now the University of Pennsylvania. The University dates from 1765, when the medical school was added to the College of Philadelphia. The latter, chartered 1755, absorbed the Academy, chartered 1749, and the Charity School, whose charter, granted to the trustees of the New Building, is dated 1740. Instruction was continued in the Charity School and the Academy for more than a century under these trusts, which sprang chiefly from Franklin's efforts.

2. Peter Collinson (1694-1768), Quaker merchant, transmitted in London the reports of Franklin's electrical experi-

ments. One of Franklin's letters to Collinson is reprinted in this volume.

4. Dr. John Mitchell, of Virginia and London, one of Franklin's earliest scientific correspondents. Years later, in negotiating the peace treaty with England (1783), Franklin used a map of the southern colonies made by Mitchell.

5. John Fothergill (1712-1780), London Quaker and physician, developed internationally famous botanical gardens. A longtime friend and correspondent, he aided Franklin in drafting the scheme of reconciliation rejected by Parliament (1774).

advised the printing of them. Mr. Collinson then gave them to Cave for publication in his *Gentleman's Magazine*;<sup>6</sup> but he chose to print them separately in a pamphlet, and Dr. Fothergill wrote the preface. Cave, it seems, judged rightly for his profit, for by the additions that arrived afterward they swelled to a quarto volume, which has had five editions, and cost him nothing for copy-money. \* \* \*

## *From Poor Richard's Almanack*<sup>7</sup>

*Preface to Poor Richard, 1733*

COURTEOUS READER,

I might in this place attempt to gain thy Favour, by declaring that I write Almanacks with no other View than that of the publick Good; but in this I should not be sincere; and Men are now adays too wise to be decciv'd by Pretences how specious soever. The plain Truth of the Matter is, I am excessive poor, and my Wife, good Woman, is, I tell her, excessive proud; she cannot bear, she says, to sit spinning in her Shift of Tow, while I do nothing but gaze at the Stars; and has threatned more than once to burn all my Books and Rattling-Traps (as she calls my Instruments) if I do not make some profitable Use of them for the Good of my Family. The Printer has offer'd me some considerable share of the Profits, and I have thus begun to comply with my Dame's Desire.

Indeed this Motive would have had Force enough to have made me publish an Almanack many Years since, had it not been over-powered by my Regard for my good Friend and Fellow Student Mr. *Titan Leeds*,<sup>8</sup> whose Interest I was extreemly unwilling to hurt: But this Obstacle (I am far from speaking it with Pleasure) is soon to be removed, since inexorable Death, who was never known to respect Merit, has already prepared the mortal Dart, the fatal Sister has already extended her destroying Shears, and that ingenious Man

6. A famous periodical (1731-1754) published in London by Edward Cave, prominent printer and journalist.

7. Franklin published his almanac annually from 1733 to 1758, then sold it, but it continued publication until 1796. Besides the usual astronomical and agricultural data of an almanac, Franklin inserted useful information, literary selections, and especially the editorial wisdom of the fictional Richard Saunders, who, with his wife, Bridget, became favorite literary characters. Poor Richard's proverbs, often old, but always newly minted for Americans, are still current homely wisdom. *The Way to Wealth* was a collection of the most utilitarian, hence the best remembered, of

these maxims, prepared for Poor Richard's preface of 1758. This is preceded in the present selections by Poor Richard's first two prefaces, those of 1733 and 1734. See also Franklin's account in the *Autobiography*. The selections from the *Almanack* follow Franklin's original text without typographical alterations.

8. Titan Leeds (1699-1738), Franklin's rival in Philadelphia, publisher of *The American Almanack*. Inspired by Swift's famous Bickerstaff hoax, Franklin immortalized Leeds by the mock prediction, from astronomical "evidence," of his imminent death. Leeds's denial only served to publicize the controversy, in which Poor Richard was still persisting when his victim died, five years later.



must soon be taken from us. He dies, by my Calculation made at his Request, on Oct. 17. 1733. 3 h. 29 m. P. M. at the very instant of the  $\delta$  of  $\odot$  and  $\varphi$  : By his own Calculation he will survive till the 26th of the same Month. This small Difference between us we have disputed whenever we have met these 9 Years past; but at length he is inclinable to agree with my Judgment: Which of us is most exact, a little 'Time will now determine. As therefore these Provinces may not longer expect to see any of his Performances after this Year, I think my self free to take up the Task, and request a share of the publick Encouragement; which I am the more apt to hope for on this Account, that the Buyer of my Almanack may consider himself, not only as purchasing an useful Utensil, but as performing an Act of Charity, to his poor *Friend and Servant*

R. SAUNDERS.

*Preface to Poor Richard, 1734*

COURTEOUS READERS,

Your kind and charitable Assistance last Year, in purchasing so large an Impression of my Almanacks, has made my Circumstances much more easy in the World, and requires my grateful Acknowledgment. My Wife has been enabled to get a Pot of her own, and is no longer oblig'd to borrow one from a Neighbour; nor have we ever since been without something of our own to put in it. She has also got a pair of Shoes, two new Shifts, and a new warm Petticoat; and for my part, I have bought a second-hand Coat, so good, that I am now not asham'd to go to Town or be seen there. These Things have render'd her Temper so much more pacifick than it us'd to be, that I may say, I have slept more, and more quietly within this last Year, than in the three foregoing Years put together. Accept my hearty Thanks therefor, and my sincere Wishes for your Health and Prosperity.

In the Preface to my last Almanack, I foretold the Death of my dear old Friend and Fellow-Student, the learned and ingenious Mr. *Titan Leeds*, which was to be on the 17th of *October*, 1733, 3 h. 29 m. P. M. at the very Instant of the  $\delta$  of  $\odot$  and  $\varphi$  . By his own Calculation he was to survive till the 26th of the same Month, and expire in the Time of the Eclipse, near 11 o'clock A. M. At which of these Times he died, or whether he be really yet dead, I cannot at this present Writing positively assure my Readers; forasmuch as a Disorder in my own Family demanded my Presence, and would not permit me as I had intended, to be with him in his last Moments, to receive his last Embrace, to close his Eyes, and do the Duty of a Friend in performing the last Offices to the Departed. Therefore it is that I cannot positively affirm whether he be dead or not; for the Stars only show to the Skilful, what will happen in the natural and

universal Chain of Causes and Effects; but 'tis well known, that the Events which would otherwise certainly happen at certain Times in the Course of Nature are sometimes set aside or postpon'd for wise and good Reasons by the immediate particular Dispositions of Providence; which particular Dispositions the Stars can by no Means discover or foreshow. There is however (and I cannot speak it without Sorrow) there is the strongest Probability that my dear Friend is *no more*; for there appears in his Name, as I am assured, an Almanack for the Year 1734, in which I am treated in a very gross and unhandsome Manner; in which I am called *a false Predicter, an Ignorant, a conceited Scribler, a Fool, and a Liar*. Mr. Leeds was too well bred to use any Man so indecently and so scurrilously, and moreover his Esteem and Affection for me was extraordinary: So that it is to be feared that Pamphlet may be only a Contrivance of somebody or other, who hopes perhaps to sell two or three Year's Almanacks still, by the sole Force and Virtue of Mr. Leeds's Name; but certainly, to put Words into the Mouth of a Gentleman and a Man of Letters, against his Friend, which the meanest and most scandalous of the People might be asham'd to utter even in a drunken Quarrel, is an unpardonable Injury to his Memory, and an Imposition upon the Publick.

Mr. Leeds was not only profoundly skilful in the useful Science he profess'd, but he was a Man of *exemplary Sobriety*, a most *sincere Friend*, and an *exact Performer of his Word*. These valuable Qualifications, with many others so much endear'd him to me, that although it should be so, that, contrary to all Probability, contrary to my Prediction and his own, he might possibly be yet alive, yet my Loss of Honour as a Prognosticator, cannot afford me so much Mortification, as his Life, Health and Safety would give me Joy and Satisfaction.

I am, *Courteous and Kind Reader*

*Your poor Friend and Servant,*

Octob. 30. 1733.

R. SAUNDERS

*The Way to Wealth: Preface to Poor Richard, 1758<sup>7</sup>*

COURTEOUS READER,

I have heard that nothing gives an Author so great Pleasure, as to find his Works respectfully quoted by other learned Authors. This

7. In 1757, on a voyage to England to represent the grievances of Pennsylvania against the Crown and the Proprietors, Franklin wrote the preface for his almanac of 1758. He imagined an old man, Father Abraham, addressing an auction, in a speech drawn almost entirely from Poor Richard's maxims on virtue and economy over the past twenty-five years. The result was an American classic of

prudential virtue. In 1759 it was separately published as *Father Abraham's Speech*. It has been republished many times. It omits Poor Richard's many worldly and even sophisticated epigrams, but it remains a compendium of the homely practicality of the common American folk. It has been here printed in its original spelling and punctuation.

Pleasure I have seldom enjoyed; for tho' I have been, if I may say it without Vanity, an *eminent Author* of Almanacks annually now a full Quarter of a Century, my Brother Authors in the same Way, for what Reason I know not, have ever been very sparing in their Applauses; and no other Author has taken the least Notice of me, so that did not my Writings produce me some *solid Pudding*, the great Deficiency of *Praise* would have quite discouraged me.

I concluded at length, that the People were the best Judges of my Merit; for they buy my Works; and besides, in my Rambles, where I am not personally known, I have frequently heard one or other of my Adages repeated, with, as *Poor Richard* says, at the End on't; this gave me some Satisfaction, as it showed not only that my Instructions were regarded, but discovered likewise some Respect for my Authority; and I own, that to encourage the Practice of remembering and repeating those wise Sentences, I have sometimes *quoted* myself with great Gravity.

Judge then how much I must have been gratified by an Incident I am going to relate to you. I stopt my Horse lately where a great Number of People were collected at a Vendue of Merchant Goods. The Hour of Sale not being come, they were conversing on the Badness of the Times, and one of the Company call'd to a plain clean old Man, with white Locks, *Pray, Father Abraham, what think you of the Times? Won't these heavy Taxes quite ruin the Country? How shall we ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to?*—Father Abraham stood up, and reply'd, If you'd have my Advice, I'll give it you in short, for a *Word to the Wise is enough*, and *many Words won't fill a Bushel*, as *Poor Richard* says. They join'd in desiring him to speak his Mind, and gathering round him, he proceeded as follows;

"Friends, says he, and Neighbours, the Taxes are indeed very heavy, and if those laid on by the Government were the only Ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them; but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our *Idleness*, three times as much by our *Pride*, and four times as much by our *Folly*, and from these Taxes the Commissioners cannot ease or deliver us by allowing an Abatement. However let us hearken to good Advice, and something may be done for us; *God helps them that help themselves*, as *Poor Richard* says, in his Almanack of 1733.

It would be thought a hard Government that should tax its People one tenth Part of their *Time*, to be employed in its Service. But *Idleness* taxes many of us much more, if we reckon all that is spent in absolute *Sloth*, or doing of nothing, with that which is spent in idle Employments or Amusements, that amount to nothing. *Sloth*, by bringing on Diseases, absolutely shortens Life. *Sloth, like Rust*,

*consumes faster than Labour wears, while the used Key is always bright*, as Poor Richard says. But dost thou love Life, then do not squander Time, for that's the Stuff Life is made of, as Poor Richard says.—How much more than is necessary do we spend in Sleep! forgetting that *The sleeping Fox catches no Poultry*, and that *there will be sleeping enough in the Grave*, as Poor Richard says. If Time be of all Things the most precious, *wasting Time* must be, as Poor Richard says, *the greatest Prodigality*, since, as he elsewhere tells us, *Lost Time is never found again*; and what we call *'Time-enough'*, always proves little enough: Let us then up and be doing, and doing to the Purpose; so by Diligence shall we do more with less Perplexity. Sloth makes all Things difficult, but Industry all easy, as Poor Richard says; and He that riseth late, must trot all Day, and shall scarce overtake his Business at Night. While Laziness travels so slowly, that Poverty soon overtakes him, as we read in Poor Richard, who adds, *Drive thy Business, let not that drive thee; and Early to Bed, and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy and wise.*

So what signifies wishing and hoping for better Times. We may make these Times better if we bestir ourselves. Industry need not wish, as Poor Richard says, and *He that lives upon Hope will die fasting. There are no Gains, without Pains*; then Help Hands, for I have no Lands, or if I have, they are smartly taxed. And, as Poor Richard likewise observes, *He that hath a Trade hath an Estate, and He that hath a Calling, hath an Office of Profit and Honour*; but then the Trade must be worked at, and the Calling well followed, or neither the Estate, nor the Office, will enable us to pay our Taxes.—If we are industrious we shall never starve; for, as Poor Richard says, *At the working Man's House Hunger looks in, but dares not enter.* Nor will the Bailiff or the Constable enter, for *Industry pays Debts, while Despair encreaseth them*, says Poor Richard.—What though you have found no Treasure, nor has any rich Relation left you a Legacy, *Diligence is the Mother of Good luck*, as Poor Richard says, and *God gives all Things to Industry.* Then plough deep, while Sluggards sleep, and you shall have Corn to sell and to keep, says Poor Dick. Work while it is called To-day, for you know not how much you may be hindered To-morrow, which makes Poor Richard say, *One To-day is worth two To-morrows*; and farther, *Have you somewhat to do To-morrow, do it To-day.* If you were a Servant, would you not be ashamed that a good Master should catch you idle? Are you then your own Master, *be ashamed to catch yourself idle*, as Poor Dick says. When there is so much to be done for yourself, your Family, your Country, and your gracious King, be up by Peep of Day; *Let not the Sun look down and say, Inglorious here he lies.* Handle your Tools without Mittens; remember that *the Cat in Gloves catches no Mice*, as Poor Richard says. 'Tis true there is much

to be done, and perhaps you are weak handed, but stick to it steadily, and you will see great Effects, for *constant Dropping wears away Stones*, and by *Diligence and Patience the Mouse ate in two the Cable*; and *little Strokes fell great Oaks*, as Poor Richard says in his Almanack, the Year I cannot just now remember.

Methinks I hear some of you say, *Must a Man afford himself no Leisure?*—I will tell thee, my Friend, what Poor Richard says, *Employ thy Time well if thou meanest to gain Leisure*; and *since thou art not sure of a Minute, throw not away an Hour*. Leisure, is Time for doing something useful; this Leisure the diligent Man will obtain, but the lazy Man never; so that, as Poor Richard says, *a Life of Leisure and a Life of Laziness are two Things*. Do you imagine that Sloth will afford you more Comfort than Labour? No, for as Poor Richard says, *Trouble springs from Idleness, and grievous Toil from needless Ease*. Many without Labour, would live by their wits only, but they break for want of Stock. Whereas Industry gives Comfort, and Plenty, and Respect: *Fly Pleasures, and they'll follow you. The diligent Spinner has a large Shift; and now I have a Sheep and a Cow, every Body bids me Good morrow*; all which is well said by Poor Richard.

But with our Industry, we must likewise be *steady, settled and careful*, and oversee our own Affairs *with our own Eyes*, and not trust too much to others; for, as Poor Richard says,

*I never saw an oft removed Tree,  
Nor yet an oft removed Family,  
That throve so well as those that settled be.*

And again, *Three Removes is as bad as a Fire*; and again, *Keep thy Shop, and thy Shop will keep thee*; and again, *If you would have your Business done, go; If not, send*. And again,

*He that by the Plough would thrive,  
Himself must either hold or drive.*

And again, *The Eye of a Master will do more Work than both His Hands*; and again, *Want of Care does us more Damage than Want of Knowledge*; and again, *Not to oversee Workmen, is to leave them your Purse open*. Trusting too much to others Care is the Ruin of many; for, as the Almanack says, *In the Affairs of this World, Men are saved, not by Faith, but by the Want of it*; but a Man's own Care is profitable; for, saith Poor Dick, *Learning is to the Studious, and Riches to the Careful*, as well as *Power to the Bold, and Heaven to the Virtuous*. And farther, *If you would have a faithful Servant, and one that you like, serve yourself*. And again, he adviseth to Circumspection and Care, even in the smallest Matters, because sometimes *a little Neglect may breed great Mischief*; adding, *For want of*

*a Nail the Shoe was lost; for want of a Shoe the Horse was lost; and for want of a Horse the Rider was lost*, being overtaken and slain by the Enemy, all for want of Care about a Horse shoe Nail.

So much for Industry, my Friends, and Attention to one's own Business; but to these we must add *Frugality*, if we would make our *Industry* more certainly successful. A Man may, if he knows not how to save as he gets, *keep his Nose all his Life to the Grindstone*, and die not worth a Groat at last. *A fat Kitchen makes a lean Will*, as Poor Richard says; and,

*Many Estates are spent in the Getting,  
Since Women for Tea forsook Spinning and Knitting,  
And Men for Punch forsook Hewing and Splitting.*

If you would be wealthy, says he, in another Almanack, *think of Saving as well as of Getting: The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her Outgoes are greater than her Incomes*. Away then with your expensive Follies, and you will not have so much Cause to complain of hard Times, heavy Taxes, and chargeable Families; for, as Poor Dick says,

*Women and Wine, Game and Deceit,  
Make the Wealth small, and the Wants great.*

And farther, *What maintains one Vice, would bring up two Children*. You may think perhaps, That a little Tea, or a little Punch now and then, Diet a little more costly, Clothes a little finer, and a little Entertainment now and then, can be no great Matter; but remember what Poor Richard says, *Many a Little makes a Mickle*; and farther, *Beware of little Expences; a small Leak will sink a great Ship*; and again, *Who Dainties love, shall Beggars prove*; and moreover, *Fools make Feasts, and wise Men eat them*.

Here you are all got together at this Vendue of *Fineries* and *Knicksnacks*. You call them Goods, but if you do not take Care, they will prove Evils to some of you. You expect they will be sold *cheap*, and perhaps they may for less than they cost; but if you have no Occasion for them, they must be *dear* to you. Remember what Poor Richard says, *Buy what thou hast no Need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy Necessaries*. And again, *At a great Pennyworth pause a while*: He means, that perhaps the Cheapness is *apparent* only, and not *real*; or the Bargain, by straitning thee in thy Business, may do thee more Harm than Good. For in another place he says, *Many have been ruined by buying good Pennyworths*. Again, Poor Richard says, *'Tis foolish to lay out Money in a Purchase of Repentance*; and yet this Folly is practised every Day at Vendues, for want of minding the Almanack. *Wise Men*, as Poor Dick says, *learn by others Harms, Fools scarcely by their own*; but *Felix quem faciunt aliena Pericula*

*cautum*.<sup>8</sup> Many a one, for the Sake of Finery on the Back, have gone with a hungry Belly, and half starved their Families; *Silks and Sattins, Scarlet and Velvets*, as Poor Richard says, *put out the Kitchen Fire*. These are not the *Necessaries* of Life; they can scarcely be called the *Conveniences*, and yet only because they look pretty, how many *want to have* them. The *artificial* Wants of Mankind thus become more numerous than the *natural*; and, as Poor Dick says, *For one poor Person, there are an hundred indigent*. By these, and other Extravagancies, the Genteel are reduced to Poverty, and forced to borrow of those whom they formerly despised, but who through *Industry* and *Frugality* have maintained their Standing; in which Case it appears plainly, that a *Ploughman on his Legs is higher than a Gentleman on his Knees*, as Poor Richard says. Perhaps they have had a small Estate left them which they knew not the Getting of; they think *'tis Day, and will never be Night*; that a little to be spent out of so much, is not worth minding; (*a Child and a Fool*, as Poor Richard says, *imagine Twenty Shillings and Twenty Years can never be spent*) but, *always taking out of, the Meadtub, and never putting in, soon comes to the Bottom*; then, as Poor Dick says, *When the Well's dry, they know the Worth of Water*. But this they might have known before, if they had taken his Advice; *If you would know the Value of Money, go and try to borrow some*; for, *he that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing*; and indeed so does he that lends to such People, when he goes to *get it in again*.—Poor Dick farther advises, and says,

*Fond Pride of Dress is sure a very Curse;  
E'er Fancy you consult, consult your Purse.*

And again, *Pride is as loud a Beggar as Want, and a great deal more saucy*. When you have bought one fine Thing you must buy ten more, that your Appearance may be all of a Piece; but Poor Dick says, *'Tis easier to suppress the first Desire, than to satisfy all that follow it*. And 'tis as truly Folly for the Poor to ape the Rich, as for the Frog to swell, in order to equal the Ox.

*Great Estates may venture more,  
But little Boats should keep near Shore.*

'Tis however a Folly soon punished; for *Pride that dines on Vanity sups on Contempt*, as Poor Richard says. And in another Place, *Pride breakfasted with Plenty, dined with Poverty, and supped with Infamy*. And after all, of what Use is this *Pride of Appearance*, for which so much is risked, so much is suffered? It cannot promote Health, or ease Pain; it makes no Increase of Merit in the Person, it creates Envy, it hastens Misfortune.

8. He is fortunate who is made cautious by the misfortunes of another.

*What is a Butterfly? At best  
He's but a Caterpillar drest.  
The gaudy Fop's his Picture just,*

as *Poor Richard* says.

But what Madness must it be to *run in Debt* for these Superfluities! We are offered, by the Terms of this Vendue, *Six Months Credit*; and that perhaps has induced some of us to attend it, because we cannot spare the ready Money, and hope now to be fine without it. But, ah, think what you do when you run in Debt; *You give to another, Power over your Liberty*. If you cannot pay at the Time, you will be ashamed to see your Creditor; you will be in Fear when you speak to him; you will make poor pitiful sneaking Excuses, and by Degrees come to lose your Veracity, and sink into base downright lying; for, as *Poor Richard* says, *The second Vice is Lying, the first is running in Debt*. And again, to the same Purpose, *Lying rides upon Debt's Back*. Whereas a freeborn *Englishman* ought not to be ashamed or afraid to see or speak to any Man living. But Poverty often deprives a Man of all Spirit and Virtue: *'Tis hard for an empty Bag to stand upright*, as *Poor Richard* truly says. What would you think of that Prince, or that Government, who should issue an Edict forbidding you to dress like a Gentleman or a Gentlewoman, on Pain of Imprisonment or Servitude? Would you not say, that you are free, have a Right to dress as you please, and that such an Edict would be a Breach of your Privileges, and such a Government tyrannical? And yet you are about to put yourself under that Tyranny when you run in Debt for such Dress! Your Creditor has Authority at his Pleasure to deprive you of your Liberty, by confining you in Goal [sic] for Life, or to sell you for a Servant, if you should not be able to pay him! When you have got your Bargain, you may, perhaps, think little of Payment; but *Creditors*, *Poor Richard* tells us, *have better Memories than Debtors*; and in another Place says, *Creditors are a superstitious Sect, great Observers of set Days and Times*. The Day comes round before you are aware, and the Demand is made before you are prepared to satisfy it. Or if you bear your Debt in Mind, the Term which at first seemed so long, will, as it lessens, appear extremely short. *Time* will seem to have added Wings to Heels as well as Shoulders. *Those have a short Lent*, saith *Poor Richard*, *who owe Money to be paid at Easter*. Then since, as he says, *The Borrower is a Slave to the Lender, and the Debtor to the Creditor*, disdain the Chain, preserve your Freedom; and maintain your Independency: Be *industrious* and *free*; be *frugal* and *free*. At present, perhaps, you may think yourself in thriving Circumstances, and that you can bear a little Extravagance [sic] without Injury;



*For Age and Want, save while you may;  
No Morning Sun lasts a whole Day,*

as *Poor Richard* says—Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever while you live, Expence is constant and certain; and *'tis easier to build two Chimnies than to keep one in Fuel*, as *Poor Richard* says. So rather go to Bed supperless than rise in Debt.

*Get what you can, and what you get hold;  
'Tis the Stone that will turn all your Lead into Gold,*

as *Poor Richard* says. And when you have got the Philosopher's Stone, sure you will no longer complain of bad Times, or the Difficulty of paying Taxes.

This Doctrine, my Friends, is *Reason* and *Wisdom*; but after all, do not depend too much upon your own *Industry*, and *Frugality*, and *Prudence*, though excellent Things, for they may all be blasted without the Blessing of Heaven; and therefore ask that Blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to those that at present seem to want it, but comfort and help them. Remember *Job* suffered, and was afterwards prosperous.

And now to conclude, *Experience keeps a dear School, but Fools will learn in no other, and scarce in that*; for it is true, we may give Advice, but we cannot give Conduct, as *Poor Richard* says: However, remember this, *They that won't be counselled, can't be helped*, as *Poor Richard* says: And farther, *That if you will not hear Reason, she'll surely rap your Knuckles*.

Thus the old Gentleman ended his Harangue. The People heard it, and approved the Doctrine and immediately practised the contrary, just as if it had been a common Sermon; for the Vendue opened, and they began to buy extravagantly, notwithstanding all his Cautions, and their own Fear of Taxes.—I found the good Man had thoroughly studied my Almanacks, and digested all I had dropt on those Topicks during the Course of Five-and-twenty Years. The frequent Mention he made of me must have tired any one else, but my Vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth Part of the Wisdom was my own which he ascribed to me, but rather the *Gleanings* I had made of the Sense of all Ages and Nations. However, I resolved to be the better for the Echo of it; and though I had at first determined to buy Stuff for a new Coat, I went away resolved to wear my old One a little longer. Reader, if thou wilt do the same, thy Profit will be as great as mine.

*I am, as ever,  
Thine to serve thee,*

July 7, 1757.

RICHARD SAUNDERS.

The Sale of the Hessians<sup>5</sup>

*From the Count de Schaumbergh to the Baron  
Hohendorf, Commanding the Hessian  
Troops in America*

ROME, February 18, 1777.

MONSIEUR LE BARON:—

On my return from Naples, I received at Rome your letter of the 27th December of last year. I have learned with unspeakable pleasure the courage our troops exhibited at Trenton,<sup>6</sup> and you cannot imagine my joy on being told that of the 1,950 Hessians engaged in the fight, but 345 escaped. There were just 1,605 men killed, and I cannot sufficiently commend your prudence in sending an exact list of the dead to my minister in London. This precaution was the more necessary, as the report sent to the English ministry does not give but 1,455 dead. This would make 483,450 florins instead of 643,500 which I am entitled to demand under our convention. You will comprehend the prejudice which such an error would work in my finances, and I do not doubt you will take the necessary pains to prove that Lord North's<sup>7</sup> list is false and yours correct.

The court of London objects that there were a hundred wounded who ought not to be included in the list, nor paid for as dead; but I trust you will not overlook my instructions to you on quitting Cassel, and that you will not have tried by human succor to recall the life of the unfortunates whose days could not be lengthened but by the loss of a leg or an arm. That would be making them a pernicious present, and I am sure they would rather die than live in a condition no longer fit for my service. I do not mean by this that you should assassinate them; we should be humane, my dear Baron, but you may insinuate to the surgeons with entire propriety that a crippled man is a reproach to their profession, and that there is no wiser course than to let every one of them die when he ceases to be fit to fight.

I am about to send to you some new recruits. Don't economize them. Remember glory before all things. Glory is true wealth. There

5. The exact date and place of the first publication of this satire are unknown. It is reported first in French; the English version was in circulation in 1778, and it has reappeared many times. The English purchase of thousands of mercenaries from Hesse evoked profound anger in America, and Franklin distorted the facts for satiric effect. It has not been proved (but was generally suspected) that Frederick II, Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, pocketed a profit on the death indemnities. He was reportedly

paid £30 per head for at least 15,700 Hessians killed on American soil. (J. F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, Vol. II, p. 66).

6. At the Battle of Trenton (Christmas night, 1776) Washington routed the Hessian defenders and took 950 prisoners, leaving twenty or thirty dead, including their commander. Franklin's exaggeration is a satiric license.

7. Frederick North, Earl of Guilford, British prime minister (1770-1782).

is nothing degrades the soldier like the love of money. He must care only for honour and reputation, but this reputation must be acquired in the midst of dangers. A battle gained without costing the conqueror any blood is an inglorious success, while the conquered cover themselves with glory by perishing with their arms in their hands. Do you remember that of the 300 Lacedæmonians who defended the defile of Thermopylæ, not one returned? How happy should I be could I say the same of my brave Hessians!

It is true that their king, Leonidas, perished with them: but things have changed, and it is no longer the custom for princes of the empire to go and fight in America for a cause with which they have no concern. And besides, to whom should they pay the thirty guineas<sup>8</sup> per man if I did not stay in Europe to receive them? Then, it is necessary also that I be ready to send recruits to replace the men you lose. For this purpose I must return to Hesse. It is true, grown men are becoming scarce there, but I will send you boys. Besides, the scarcer the commodity the higher the price. I am assured that the women and little girls have begun to till our lands, and they get on not badly. You did right to send back to Europe that Dr. Crueneras who was so successful in curing dysentery. Don't bother with a man who is subject to looseness of the bowels. That disease makes bad soldiers. One coward will do more mischief in an engagement than ten brave men will do good. Better that they burst in their barracks than fly in a battle, and tarnish the glory of our arms. Besides, you know that they pay me as killed for all who die from disease, and I don't get a farthing for runaways. My trip to Italy, which has cost me enormously, makes it desirable that there should be a great mortality among them. You will therefore promise promotion to all who expose themselves; you will exhort them to seek glory in the midst of dangers; you will say to Major Maundorff that I am not at all content with his saving the 345 men who escaped the massacre of Trenton. Through the whole campaign he has not had ten men killed in consequence of his orders. Finally, let it be your principal object to prolong the war and avoid a decisive engagement on either side, for I have made arrangements for a grand Italian opera, and I do not wish to be obliged to give it up. Meantime I pray God, my dear Baron de Hohendorf, to have you in his holy and gracious keeping.

8. The exact death bounty is not known, but Franklin's figure here verifies that

quoted by Watson from an independent source.

Letter to Peter Collinson<sup>1</sup>

[Kite and Key]

[PHILADELPHIA] Oct. 19, 1752.

SIR,

As frequent mention is made in public papers from *Europe* of the success of the *Philadelphia* experiment for drawing the electric fire from clouds by means of pointed rods of iron erected on high buildings, &c., it may be agreeable to the curious to be informed, that the same experiment has succeeded in *Philadelphia*, though made in a different and more easy manner, which is as follows:

Make a small cross of two light strips of cedar, the arms so long as to reach to the four corners of a large thin silk handkerchief when extended; tie the corners of the handkerchief to the extremities of the cross, so you have the body of a kite; which being properly accommodated with a tail, loop, and string, will rise in the air, like those made of paper; but this being of silk, is fitter to bear the wet and wind of a thunder-gust without tearing. To the top of the upright stick of the cross is to be fixed a very sharp-pointed wire, rising a foot or more above the wood. To the end of the twine, next the hand, is to be tied a silk ribbon, and where the silk and twine join, a key may be fastened. This kite is to be raised when a thunder-gust appears to be coming on, and the person who holds the string must stand within a door or window, or under some cover, so that the silk ribbon may not be wet; and care must be taken that the twine does not touch the frame of the door or window. As soon as any of the thunder-clouds come over the kite, the pointed wire will draw the electric fire from them, and the kite, with all the twine, will be electrified, and the loose filaments of the twine will stand out every way, and be attracted by an approaching finger. And when the rain has wet the kite and twine, so that it can conduct the electric fire freely, you will find it stream out plentifully from the key on the approach of your knuckle. At this key the phial<sup>2</sup> may be charged; and from electric fire thus obtained, spirits may be kindled, and all the other electric experiments be performed, which are usually done by the help of a rubbed glass globe or tube, and thereby the sameness of the electric matter with that of lightning completely demonstrated.

B. FRANKLIN.

1. Franklin also makes mention of these experiments in the *Autobiography*, above. This letter was among the documents read to the Royal Society in London on December 21, 1752, concerning Franklin's identification of lightning with electricity, for which he received the

Copley Medal in 1753 and was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1756. The letter was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, December, 1752.

2. The Leyden jar, an early experimental electrical condenser.

The Ephemera<sup>3</sup>

You may remember, my dear friend, that when we lately spent that happy day in the delightful garden and sweet society of the Moulin Joly,<sup>4</sup> I stopt a little in one of our walks, and staid some time behind the company. We had been shown numberless skeletons of a kind of little fly, called an ephemera, whose successive generations, we were told, were bred and expired within the day. I happened to see a living company of them on a leaf, who appeared to be engaged in conversation. You know I understand all the inferior animal tongues; my too great application of the study of them is the best excuse I can give for the little progress I have made in your charming language.<sup>5</sup> I listened through curiosity to the discourse of these little creatures; but as they, in their national vivacity, spoke three or four together, I could make but little of their conversation. I found, however, by some broken expressions that I heard now and then, they were disputing warmly on the merits of two foreign musicians, one a *cousin*, the other a *moscheto*;<sup>6</sup> in which dispute they spent their time, seemingly as regardless of the shortness of life as if they had been sure of living a month. Happy people! thought I, you live certainly under a wise, just, and mild government, since you have no public grievances to complain of, nor any subject of contention but the perfections and imperfections of foreign music. I turned my head from them to an old grey-headed one, who was single on another leaf, and talking to himself. Being amused with his soliloquy, I put it down in writing, in hopes it will likewise amuse her to whom I am so much indebted for the most pleasing of all amusements, her delicious company and heavenly harmony.<sup>7</sup>

"It was," said he, "the opinion of learned philosophers of our race, who lived and flourished long before my time, that this vast world, the Moulin Joly, could not itself subsist more than eighteen hours; and I think there was some foundation for that opinion, since, by

3. In France as American representative (1776-85) Franklin had a small press for propaganda releases, on which he also printed his "Bagatelles," charming trifles to amuse his friends. "The Ephemera," unlike most of these essays, shows his characteristic speculative curiosity as well as the wit that captivated the French. Madame Brillion, for whom he wrote this, was a young Passy matron at least thirty-five years his junior, with whom he played simultaneously the father and gallant. Franklin wrote this, the first Bagatelle, in 1778; it was printed both in French and English, but the dates are not established.

4. Name of an island in the Seine, loca-

tion of the home of a friend, where they had spent a day together.

5. He had asked her to correct his French; she thought correction impaired his style and distracted him with the statement that it was "always good French to say: '*Je vous aime*'" (Van Doren).

6. The *cousin* is a gnat, the *moscheto* a mosquito; Franklin here makes a playful reference to the continuous rivalries, in Paris, between opposing musical schools.

7. Madame Brillion, an accomplished musician, played and sang, and set verses to music for Franklin.

the apparent motion of the great luminary that gives life to all nature, and which in my time has evidently declined considerably towards the ocean at the end of our earth, it must then finish its course, be extinguished in the waters that surround us, and leave the world in cold and darkness, necessarily producing universal death and destruction. I have lived seven of those hours, a great age, being no less than four hundred and twenty minutes of time. How very few of us continue so long! I have seen generations born, flourish, and expire. My present friends are the children and grandchildren of the friends of my youth, who are now, alas, no more! And I must soon follow them; for, by the course of nature, though still in health, I cannot expect to live above seven or eight minutes longer. What now avails all my toil and labor, in amassing honey-dew on this leaf, which I cannot live to enjoy! What the political struggles I have been engaged in, for the good of my compatriot inhabitants of this bush, or my philosophical studies for the benefit of our race in general! for, in politics, what can laws do without morals? Our present race of ephemeræ will in a course of minutes become corrupt, like those of other and older bushes, and consequently as wretched. And in philosophy how small our progress! Alas! art is long, and life is short! My friends would comfort me with the idea of a name, they say, I shall leave behind me, and they tell me I have lived long enough to nature and to glory. But what will fame be to an ephemeræ who no longer exists? And what will become of all history in the eighteenth hour, when the world itself, even the whole *Moulin Joly*, shall come to its end, and be buried in universal ruin?"

To me, after all my eager pursuits, no solid pleasures now remain, but the reflection of a long life spent in meaning well, the sensible conversation of a few good lady ephemeræ, and now and then a kind smile and a tunc from the ever amiable *Brillante*.<sup>8</sup>

B. FRANKLIN.

1778

### To Madame Helvetius<sup>9</sup>

Mortified at the barbarous resolution pronounced by you so positively yesterday evening, that you would remain single the rest of your life as a compliment due to the memory of your husband, I

8. This pun on her name, Brillion, appears also in Franklin's letters.

9. Another Bagatelle. Madame Helvetius, widow of the philosopher Claude Adrien Helvetius, who had died in 1771, was Franklin's neighbor at Auteuil; a famous beauty in her youth, she was now the gay and sympathetic hostess of two generations of intellectuals. Frank-

lin became her intimate companion and proposed marriage, which she wisely declined; he perpetuated the offer in such pleasantries as this famous essay, which he gave her, in French, in December, 1779. The first printings, in French and English, are not dated; however, it has been many times reprinted.

retired to my chamber. Throwing myself upon my bed, I dreamt that I was dead, and was transported to the Elysian Fields.

I was asked whether I wished to see any persons in particular; to which I replied that I wished to see the philosophers. "There are two who live here at hand in this garden; they are good neighbors, and very friendly towards one another."—"Who are they?"—"Socrates and Helvetius."—"I esteem them both highly; but let me see Helvetius first, because I understand a little French, but not a word of Greek." I was conducted to him, he received me with much courtesy, having known me, he said, by character, some time past. He asked me a thousand questions relative to the war, the present state of religion, of liberty, of the government in France. "You do not inquire, then," said I, "after your dear friend, Madame Helvetius; yet she loves you exceedingly. I was in her company not more than an hour ago." "Ah," said he, "you make me recur to my past happiness, which ought to be forgotten in order to be happy here. For many years I could think of nothing but her, though at length I am consoled. I have taken another wife, the most like her that I could find; she is not indeed altogether so handsome, but she has a great fund of wit and good-sense, and her whole study is to please me. She is at this moment gone to fetch the best nectar and ambrosia to regale me; stay here awhile and you will see her." "I perceive," said I, "that your former friend is more faithful to you than you are to her; she has had several good offers, but has refused them all. I will confess to you that I loved her extremely; but she was cruel to me, and rejected me peremptorily for your sake." "I pity you sincerely," said he, "for she is an excellent woman, handsome and amiable. But do not the Abbé de la R \* \* \* \* and the Abbé M \* \* \* \* visit her?"—"Certainly they do; not one of your friends has dropped her acquaintance."—"If you had gained the Abbé M \* \* \* \* with a bribe of good coffee and cream, perhaps you would have succeeded; for he is as deep a reasoner as Duns Scotus or St. Thomas;<sup>2</sup> he arranges and methodizes his arguments in such a manner that they are almost irresistible. Or if by a fine edition of some old classic you had gained the Abbé de la R \* \* \* \* to speak *against* you, that would have been still better, as I always observed that when he recommended any thing to her, she had a great inclination to do directly the contrary." As he finished these words the new Madame Helvetius entered with the nectar, and I recognized her immediately as my former American friend, Mrs.

1. Van Doren writes (*Benjamin Franklin*, p. 648): "The witty Abbé Morellet, who had met Franklin in England, lived near Madame Helvetius if not in her house. The book-loving Abbé de la Roche was comfortably domesticated with her. \* \* \*"

2. Duns Scotus (1265?-1308), Scottish scholastic theologian, and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274), Italian scholastic and founder of Thomist philosophy—both proverbial for skill in dialectics.

Franklin!<sup>3</sup> I reclaimed her, but she answered me coldly: "I was a good wife to you for forty-nine years and four months, nearly half a century; let that content you. I have formed a new connection here, which will last to eternity."

Indignant at this refusal of my Eurydice,<sup>4</sup> I immediately resolved to quit those ungrateful shades, and return to this good world again, to behold the sun and you! Here I am; let us *avenge ourselves!*

1779

### Letter to Joseph Priestley<sup>5</sup>

[*Science and Humanity*]

PASSY, Feb. 8, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

Your kind letter of September 27 came to hand but very lately, the bearer having stayed long in Holland. I always rejoice to hear of your being still employed in experimental researches into nature, and of the Success you meet with. The rapid Progress *true* Science now makes, occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born so soon. It is impossible to imagine the height to which may be carried, in a thousand years, the power of man over matter. We may perhaps learn to deprive large masses of their gravity, and give them absolute levity, for the sake of easy transport. Agriculture may diminish its labour and double its produce; all diseases may by sure means be prevented or cured, not excepting even that of old age, and our lives lengthened at pleasure even beyond the antediluvian standard. O that moral science were in as fair a way of improvement, that men would cease to be wolves to one another, and that human beings would at length learn what they now improperly call humanity!<sup>6</sup>

I am glad my little paper on the *Aurora Borealis* pleased. If it should occasion further enquiry, and so produce a better hypothesis, it will not be wholly useless. I am ever, with the greatest and most sincere esteem, dear sir, yours very affectionately

B. FRANKLIN.

3. Franklin's wife, Deborah, had died in 1774.

4. In the Greek myth, Eurydice, having died, was sought by her husband, Orpheus, in Pluto's realm of death.

5. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), British chemist and liberal, supported the American and French revolutions. Subjected to hostility and violence, he emigrated to Philadelphia (1791). His re-

search and writing advanced science and religious liberalism, especially Unitarianism. His correspondence with Franklin was considerable.

6. The belief in moral progress, common to the thought of the Enlightenment, persists in Franklin's writing and correspondence. Often he expressed its goal as the abolition of war.



## THOMAS PAINE

(1737-1809)

Thomas Paine, with his natural gift for pamphleteering and rebellion, was appropriately born into an age of revolution. "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good," he once declared; and he served the rebels of three countries.

This "Great Commoner of Mankind," son of a nominal Quaker of Thetford, England, was early apprenticed to his father, a staymaker. At nineteen, he went to sea for perhaps two years, then followed his father's trade again as master staymaker in several English communities. For nearly twelve years, beginning in 1762, he was employed as an excise officer. His leisure was devoted to the eager pursuit of books and ideas, particularly the study of social philosophy and the new science. After three years in the excise service, he was dismissed for a neglect of duty, but he was reinstated following a year spent as a teacher near London.

The young excise collector learned social science at first hand, seeing the hardships of the tax-burdened masses and the hopelessness of humble workers of his own class. His first wife having died, he acquired, in his second marriage, a small tobaccoist's shop in Lewes, where he was stationed; but he still lived constantly on the edge of privation. In 1772 he wrote his first pamphlet, *The Case of the Officers of the Excise*, and he spent

the next winter in London, representing his fellow workers in a petition to Parliament for a living wage. Suddenly he was dismissed, possibly for his agency in this civil revolt, although the official charge was that he had neglected his duties at Lewes. Within two months of losing his position, he lost his shop through bankruptcy and his wife by separation. This was his unhappy situation at thirty-seven, when Franklin met him in London and recognized his peculiar talents in their American perspective. In 1774 Paine made his way to Philadelphia, bearing a cautious letter from Franklin recommending him as "an ingenious worthy young man."

In Philadelphia, Paine edited the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, and contributed to the *Pennsylvania Journal*. Readers of the two Philadelphia papers recognized a political satirist of genius. On January 10, 1776, his famous pamphlet *Common Sense* appeared. It boldly advocated a "Declaration for Independence," a courageous act of high treason against England; Paine knew quite well that publication of the pamphlet could cost him his life. In three months it sold probably a hundred thousand copies; they circulated from hand to hand. Paine became forthwith the most articulate spokesman of the American Revolution. Appointed aide-de-camp to General Greene, he served

through the engagements of 1776 in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; but his chief contribution was a series of sixteen pamphlets (1776-1783) entitled *The American Crisis* and signed "Common Sense." The first of these, with its blast at the "summer soldier and the sunshine patriot," appeared in the black month of December, 1776, just after Washington's retreat across New Jersey. It was read at once to all regiments, and like the twelve later *Crisis* pamphlets that dealt directly with the military engagements, it restored the morale and inspired the success of that citizens' army. Paine had served on various committees of the Continental Congress; he was clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly; he received an honorary degree from the College of Philadelphia (the University of Pennsylvania), and went to France to help negotiate a loan for the colonies.

In 1787 he went to Paris and London. In both countries he was received as an important international figure. In England, the patronage of the great terminated suddenly. Paine's *Rights of Man* (Part I, 1791; Part II, 1792), answering Burke's recent *Reflections on the French Revolution*, suggested the overthrow of the British monarchy. Indicted for treason, he was forced to seek refuge in France.

The French revolutionaries received him enthusiastically; but when he opposed the execu-

tion of Louis XVI and the Reign of Terror, he was imprisoned. He had already sent to press in Paris the first part of *The Age of Reason*, a deistic treatise advocating a rationalistic view of religion. Set free as a result of the friendly intercession of James Monroe, then American ambassador to France, he completed *The Age of Reason* (1794-1795), and wrote his last important treatise, *Agrarian Justice* (1797). In 1802 he returned to America, only to find that his patriotic services had been forgotten in the wave of resentment against his "atheistical" beliefs and the French Revolution. Neglected by all but his vilifiers, he remained in obscurity, for the most part on his farm in New Rochelle.

His excellence lies in the fiery ardor and determination of his words, the conviction of his courageous and indomitable spirit, and the sincerity and passion of his belief in the rights of the humblest man.

The comprehensive edition of Paine's works is that of Moncure D. Conway, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, 4 vols., 1894-1896; and the most nearly definitive biography is Conway's *The Life of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols., 1892. Shorter lives have been written by F. J. Gould, 1925; by Crane Brinton in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 1934; and by Hesketh Pearson, 1937. Longer, and authoritative, is Alfred O. Aldridge, *Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine*, 1959. A careful text is the one-volume edition of A. W. Peach, *Selections from the Works of Thomas Paine*, 1928; an excellent one-volume scholarly edition with introduction is *Thomas Paine: Representative Selections*, edited by H. H. Clark, American Writers Series, 1944. In this volume the Conway edition is followed.

## From Common Sense

### *Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs*<sup>1</sup>

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves; that he will put on, or rather that he will not put off, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Volunes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms as the last resource decide the contest; the appeal was the choice of the king, and the continent has accepted the challenge.

It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham<sup>2</sup> (who though an able minister was not without his faults) that on his being attacked in the House of Commons on the score that his measures were only of a temporary kind, replied, "*They will last my time.*" Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the colonies in the present contest, the name of Ancestors will be remembered by future generations with detestation.

The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent—of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the seedtime of continental union, faith, and honor. The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound would enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new era for politics is struck—a new method of thinking has arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the nineteenth of April,<sup>3</sup> i.e. to the commencement of hostilities, are like the almanacks of the last year; which

1. "Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs" was Part III of *Common Sense*. Part I discussed the British constitution in relation to "the origin and design of government"; Part II analyzed the weaknesses of "monarchy and hereditary succession." The American Declaration of Independence was promulgated six months later, on July 4.

2. Henry Pelham, British prime minister (1743–1754).

3. April 19, 1775, the date of the battles of Lexington and Concord, where American minutemen defended their ammunition stores against British troops—the first armed engagements of the Revolution.

though proper then, are superseded and useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great Britain; the only difference between the parties was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it has so far happened that the first has failed, and the second has withdrawn her influence.

As much has been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which, like an agreeable dream, has passed away and left us as we were, it is but right that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire into some of the many material injuries which these colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with and dependent on Great Britain. To examine that connection and dependence on the principles of nature and common sense; to see what we have to trust to, if separated, and what we are to expect, if dependent.

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America has flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more than is true; for I answer roundly that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessities of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.

But she has protected us, say some. That she hath engrossed us is true, and defended the continent at our expense as well as her own is admitted; and she would have defended Turkey from the same motive, viz. for the sake of trade and dominion.

Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great Britain without considering that her motive was *interest*, not *attachment*; and that she did not protect us from *our enemies* on *our account*, but from her enemies on her own account, from those who had no quarrel with us on any *other account*, and who will always be our enemies on the *same account*. Let Britain waive her pretensions to the continent, or the continent throw off the dependence, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover's<sup>4</sup> last war ought to warn us against connections. \* \* \*

4. The Prussian house of Hanover occupied the British throne from 1714 to 1901. Paine thus connects the repeated

French invasions of Hanover, during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), with the Franco-British rivalries.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap, by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for, buy them where we will.

But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connection are without number; and our duty to mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance: because any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels, and set us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom we have neither anger nor complaint. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no partial connection with any part of it. 'Tis the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do while by her dependence on Britain she is made the makeweight in the scale of British politics.

Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because of her connection with Britain*. The next war may not turn out like the last,<sup>5</sup> and should it not, the advocates for reconciliation now will be wishing for separation then, because neutrality in that case would be a safer convoy than a man of war. Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of heaven. The time likewise at which the continent was discovered, adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled, increases the force of it. The Reformation was preceded by the discovery of America, as if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety. \* \* \*

Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offenses of Great Britain, and, still hoping for the best, are apt to call out, *Come, come, we shall be friends again for all this*. But examine the passions and feelings of mankind; bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell me whether you can hereafter love, honor, and faithfully serve the power that hath carried fire and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connection with Britain, whom you can neither love nor honor, will be forced and unnatural, and being formed

5. The British were victorious in the French and Indian War, the American phase of the Seven Years' War.

only on the plan of present convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover; and whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of a sycophant.

This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which nature justifies, and without which we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. 'Tis not in the power of Britain or of Europe to conquer America, if she doth not conquer herself by *delay* and *timidity*. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected the whole continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so precious and useful.

It is repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this continent can long remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain doth not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot, at this time, compass a plan, short of separation, which can promise the continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is *now* a fallacious dream. Nature has deserted the connection, and art cannot supply her place. For, as Milton wisely expresses, "Never can true reconciliation grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."<sup>6</sup> \* \* \*

But the most powerful of all arguments is, that nothing but independence, i.e. a continental form of government, can keep the peace of the continent and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the event of a reconciliation with Britain *now*, as it is more than probable that it will be followed by a revolt somewhere or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of Britain.

Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity; (thousands more will probably suffer the same fate). Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All they *now* possess is

liberty; what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose they disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the colonies towards a British government will be like that of a youth who is nearly out of his time; they will care very little about her. And a government which cannot preserve the peace is no government at all, and in that case we pay our money for nothing; and pray what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say, many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independence, fearing that it would produce civil wars. It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case here; for there is ten times more to dread from a patched up connection than from independence. I make the sufferer's case my own, and I protest, that were I driven from house and home, my property destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as a man, sensible of injuries, I could never relish the doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby.

The colonies have manifested such a spirit of good order and obedience to continental government as is sufficient to make every reasonable person easy and happy on that head. No man can assign the least pretense for his fears on any other grounds than such as are truly childish and ridiculous, viz., that one colony will be striving for superiority over another. \* \* \*

But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honors, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law *ought* to be king, and there ought to be no other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is.<sup>7</sup> \* \* \*

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

7. Popular sovereignty and a government by social contract are recurrent

themes in Paine's later writings; cf. the Declaration of Independence.

*From The American Crisis*<sup>8</sup>

These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it Now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly:—"Tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to) TAX but "to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER", and if being bound in that manner, is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the Independence of the Continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier, it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter, neither could we, while we were in a dependent state. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own; we have none to blame but ourselves. But no great deal is lost yet; all that Howe<sup>9</sup> has been doing for this month past, is rather a ravage than a conquest, which the spirit of the Jersies<sup>1</sup> a year ago would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover.

I have as little superstition in me as any man living, but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me, as to suppose that he has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman, or a house-breaker, has as good a pretence as he.

8. The first of the sixteen pamphlets now known as *The Crisis*, this originally appeared undated in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, December 19, 1776. There were three pamphlet editions within the week, one undated, one dated December 19, and one dated December 23. Since Paine later referred to the last as authorita-

tive, it is reproduced here. The last number of *The Crisis*, the sixteenth, appeared on December 9, 1783.

9. Lord William Howe had taken command of the British troops in America in 1775.

1. The colony was divided into East and West Jersey.



'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them: Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors which an imaginary apparition would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

As I was with the troops at Fort-Lee, and marched with them to the edge of Pennsylvania, I am well acquainted with many circumstances, which those who live at a distance, know but little or nothing of.<sup>2</sup> Our situation there was exceedingly cramped, the place being a narrow neck of land between the North-River<sup>3</sup> and the Hackensack. Our force was inconsiderable, being not one-fourth so great as Howe could bring against us. We had no army at hand to have relieved the garrison, had we shut ourselves up and stood on our defence. Our ammunition, light artillery, and the best part of our stores, had been removed, on the apprehension that Howe would endeavor to penetrate the Jerseys,<sup>4</sup> in which case Fort-Lee could be of no use to us; for it must occur to every thinking man, whether in the army or not, that these kind of field forts are only for temporary purposes, and last in use no longer than the enemy directs his force against the particular object, which such forts are raised to defend.<sup>5</sup> Such was our situation and condition at Fort-Lee on the

2. On November 20, General Greene made the hasty retreat southward from the Hudson forts to Newark, New Jersey. There, according to tradition, Paine wrote this *Crisis* paper on a drumhead. In less than a month it was printed, and Washington had it read to each regiment of the army, now encamped in Pennsylvania. A few days later, on Christmas night, they struck successfully across the Delaware at Trenton, and nine days later they attacked at Princeton. Paine participated in both battles.

3. The Hudson.

4. Cf. "Jersies" above. The *Crisis* papers, printed, sometimes reprinted, under pressure, were never definitively edited by Paine.

5. Propagandist Paine naturally belittles the British success—actually the capture of Fort Lee and Fort Washington, the strategic defenses of the Hudson, together with enough men and material to make a field regiment.

morning of the 20th of November, when an officer arrived with information that the enemy with 200 boats had landed about seven miles above: Major General Green,<sup>6</sup> who commanded the garrison, immediately ordered them under arms, and sent express to General Washington at the town of Hackensack, distant by the way of the ferry, six miles. Our first object was to secure the bridge over the Hackensack, which laid up the river between the enemy and us, about six miles from us, and three from them. General Washington arrived in about three-quarters of an hour, and marched at the head of the troops towards the bridge, which place I expected we should have a brush for; however, they did not choose to dispute it with us, and the greatest part of our troops went over the bridge, the rest over the ferry, except some which passed at a mill on a small creek, between the bridge and the ferry, and made their way through some marshy grounds up to the town of Hackensack, and there passed the river. We brought off as much baggage as the wagons could contain, the rest was lost. The simple object was to bring off the garrison, and march them on till they could be strengthened by the Jersey or Pennsylvania militia, so as to be enabled to make a stand. We staid four days at Newark, collected our out-posts with some of the Jersey militia, and marched out twice to meet the enemy, on being informed that they were advancing, though our numbers were greatly inferior to theirs. Howe, in my little opinion, committed a great error in generalship in not throwing a body of forces off from Staten-Island through Amboy, by which means he might have seized all our stores at Brunswick,<sup>7</sup> and intercepted our march into Pennsylvania; but if we believe the power of hell to be limited, we must likewise believe that their agents are under some providential control.

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware; suffice it for the present to say, that both officers and men, though greatly harassed and fatigued, frequently without rest, covering, or provision, the inevitable consequences of a long retreat, bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes centered in one, which was, that the country would turn out and help them to drive the enemy back. *Voltaire*<sup>8</sup> has remarked that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kind of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that God hath

6. *I.e.*, Greene. Nathaniel Greene commanded one of the divisions against Trenton, a month later.

7. Now Perth Amboy and New Brunswick. By holding this line Howe could have blocked Greene's only strategic retreat to Pennsylvania.

8. The French man of letters Voltaire (1694–1778), made this remark concerning William III of England in his principal historical treatise, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751), Chapter 17.

blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care. \* \* \*

Quitting this class of men, I turn with the warm ardor of a friend to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all: not on THIS state or THAT state, but on EVERY state: up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands;<sup>9</sup> throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but "*show your faith by your works*,"<sup>1</sup> that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back,<sup>2</sup> the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house, burns and destroys my property, and kills or threatens to kill me, or those that are in it, and to "*bind me in all cases whatsoever*" to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me, whether he who does it is a king or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel, and welcome, I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one whose character is that of a sottish, stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive likewise a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being, who at the last day shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow, and the slain of America. \* \* \*

I thank God that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear. I know our situation well, and can see the way out of it. While our army was collected, Howe dared not risk a battle; and it is no credit to him

9. Cf. I Samuel xviii: 7: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

1. Cf. James ii: 18.

2. I.e., both well-settled "counties," and backwoods.

that he decamped from the White Plains,<sup>3</sup> and waited a mean opportunity to ravage the defenceless Jerseys; but it is great credit to us, that, with a handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat for near an hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our fieldpieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate, for we were near three weeks in performing it, that the country<sup>4</sup> might have time to come in. 'Twice we marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp, and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more we are again collected and collecting, our new army at both ends of the continent is recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men, well-armed and clothed. This is our situation, and who will may know it. By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils—a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians, and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of. Look on this picture and weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented.

COMMON SENSE

December 23, 1776

*From The Age of Reason*<sup>5</sup>[*God of Nature—God of Reason*]

But some perhaps will say: Are we to have no word of God—no revelation? I answer: Yes; there is a word of God; there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD; and it is in *this* word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

Human language is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information. The idea that God sent Jesus Christ to publish, as they say, the glad tidings to all nations from one end of the earth unto the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed, as those world-saviors believed and continued to believe for several centuries (and that in contradiction to the discoveries of philosophers and the ex-

3. At White Plains, New York, Howe had successfully attacked Washington's positions in October, but failed to follow up his advantage.

4. The militia, or local volunteers.

5. Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, as

he said, to offset the atheism of the French Revolution; but he came to be regarded as an atheist himself. The following selections deal with his concept of God. The text is that of Part I, the first English edition, Paris, 1794.

perience of navigators), that the earth was flat like a trencher; and that a man might walk to the end of it. \* \* \*

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The creation speaketh a universal language, independently of human speech or human languages, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever existing original which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the Creation. \* \* \*

The only idea man can affix to the name of God is that of a *first cause*, the cause of all things. And incomprehensibly difficult as it is for man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. It is difficult beyond description to conceive that space can have no end; but it is more difficult to conceive an end. It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time; but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time. In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause, man calls God.

It is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God. Take away that reason and he would be incapable of understanding anything; and, in this case, it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts of the book called the Bible that convey to us any idea of God are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm; I recollect no other. Those parts are true *deistical* compositions; for

they treat of the *Deity* through his works. They take the book of Creation as the word of God; they refer to no other book; and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume. \* \* \*

I recollect not enough of the passages in Job to insert them correctly; but there is one that occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"<sup>6</sup>

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible; but it contains two distinct questions that admit of distinct answers.

First, Canst thou by *searching* find out God? Yes, because, in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by *searching* into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

Secondly, Canst thou find out the Almighty to *perfection*? No, not only because the power and wisdom he had manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible; but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a small display of that immensity of power and wisdom by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist.

It is evident that both these questions were put to the reason of the person to whom they are supposed to have been addressed; and it is only by admitting the first question to be answered affirmatively that the second could follow. It would have been unnecessary, and even absurd, to have put a second question more difficult than the first, if the first question had been answered negatively. The two questions have different objects; the first refers to the existence of God, the second to his attributes. Reason can discover the one, but it falls infinitely short in discovering the whole of the other.

1794

6. Job xi: 7. For God revealed in nature see Job xii and Job xxxviii-xli.

## THOMAS JEFFERSON

(1743-1826)

It may be that Thomas Jefferson's thought and personality have influenced his countrymen more deeply, and remained more effectively alive, than those of any other American. Yet, of

the eight titles published by him, only one represents what can be called a book in the usual sense. It is estimated that fifty volumes will be required for the definitive edition of his writings, com-

posed chiefly of state papers, a few treatises, and the incredible twenty-five thousand letters, many of great length, by which he was always "sowing useful truths," as he called it. His words could not be contained by a letter or confined at their first destination; they were reborn in the public ideals and acts of the American people, and indeed in their daily speech. This is partly because he embodied their best meanings in such public utterances as the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, in the Declaration of Independence, of which he was the principal author, in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, a veritable storehouse of humane ideas and liberal democracy, which he published in 1784-1785, in his addresses as president, and in his autobiography, published three years after his death.

This Virginian planter-aristocrat had as vigorous humanitarian sympathies as Franklin, and though thirty-seven years his junior, he was just as much a product of the Enlightenment. His mind, like Franklin's, ranged curiously over many fields of knowledge—law, philosophy, government, architecture, education, religion, science, agriculture, mechanics—and whatever he touched, he enriched in some measure. He knew that he was not profound, but he read widely, impelled by the same practical reason as Franklin—to gain understanding. The development of rational science from Bacon to Newton; the history of English law from King Alfred to Blackstone; the tradition of English liberty in Harrington,

Milton, Hobbes, Locke, and Algernon Sydney; the challenging ideas of contemporary French liberalism in Montesquieu, Helvétius, Voltaire, and the physiocrats—from acquaintance with these, indeed, he did gain understanding. This understanding he applied, with simple American directness, to a conception of democracy for a new land of plenty, where the people might have a fresh start toward liberty, selfhood, and that excellence which he sought in all things. This patrician humanist looked to merit and ability alone, not to privilege; the natural rights of man must be secured by law inalienably for all, irrespective of station. For him, government, a necessary evil, found sanction only in the common consent of a social contract; its purpose was the benefit of the individual, not his exploitation; it must provide freedom of speech, thought, association, press, worship, education, and enterprise. In a letter to Benjamin Rush in 1800, he stated his conviction, unaltered throughout his life: "I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

These ideas found practical expression in Jefferson's forty years of a public life so active that only its highest moments can be mentioned here. He was born in Albemarle County, Virginia, April 13, 1743. Years of private study were supplemented by two years at William and Mary College. He then prepared for the practice of law, but his election to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769 drew him

into public life. He represented Virginia in the Second Continental Congress in 1775; the following year—with John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston—he drafted the Declaration of Independence. Again in the Virginia legislature, he devoted himself to codifying and liberalizing the laws and to the cause of toleration represented in his bill for the establishment of religious freedom, finally adopted later, in 1786. He was governor of Virginia (1779–1781), and delegate to the Congress of the Confederation, before going to Paris to assist Franklin and Adams in treaty negotiations (1784). He remained in Paris to succeed Franklin as American minister (1785–1789). As the first American secretary of state (1790–1793) in Washington's cabinet, his opposition to the extreme Federalism and the aristocratic tendencies of Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, drew the support of those who favored equalitarian measures and greater local independence, thus defining the constitutional questions that have since continued to provide the issues for the two American parties. On these issues he was narrowly defeated by John Adams in 1796, and accepted the vice-presidency, then awarded the unsuccessful candidate. On the same issues he won the election of 1800, and served for two terms as president. Among the many acts of his administration may be noted his measures to prevent unwarranted encroachment of the federal powers upon the domain of the

states, and his concern for the expansion of the country, reflected in the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and in his sponsorship of the expedition of Lewis and Clark (1803–1806).

In 1809 he "retired" to a very active life at Monticello, a monument to his architectural genius, whose gradual perfection had been his hobby since 1767. The sale of his library of ten thousand volumes to the national government partially relieved his financial obligations and provided the foundation of the national library of his dreams (now the Library of Congress). His democratic theories of education, formulated through the years, soon took concrete form in the University of Virginia (1819), whose notable buildings he designed, and whose first Rector he became. His correspondence, in which he now expressed the seasoned experience and the accumulated wisdom of a lifetime, grew to enormous proportions, which, as he said, often denied him "the leisure of reading a single page in a week." The only American of his time to be elected to the Institute of France, Jefferson experimented in agriculture, paleontology, geography, and botany, and was president of the American Philosophical Society for eighteen years. It was fitting that his death in 1826 should occur on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The earliest reliable edition of Jefferson's works is *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 10 vols., edited by P. L. Ford, 1892–1899. The Memorial Edition, edited by A. A. Lipscomb and A. E. Bergh, 20 vols., 1903–1907, contains additional texts not in the Ford edition. A



definitive edition, in preparation under the direction of Julian P. Boyd, is expected to comprise at least fifty volumes, of which 15 have appeared at this date (1959), entitled *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton University Press). Many important letters have been published. See especially *Thomas Jefferson Correspondence* \* \* \*, edited by W. C. Ford, 1916; *Correspondence Between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Paul Wiltstach, 1925; *The Best Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, 1926, and *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, edited by L. J. Cappon, 1959. Available single-volume collections are *The Complete Jefferson* \* \* \* except his *Letters*, edited by Saul K. Padover, 1943; *Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by A. Koch and W.

Peden, 1944; *Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson: Representative Selections*, edited by F. C. Prescott, 1934. W. Peden edited *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1955.

Biographies and special studies are numerous. Among the available general treatments, see A. J. Nock, *Jefferson*, 1926; and Gilbert Chinard, *Thomas Jefferson: The Apostle of Americanism*, 1929. Dumas Malone has in progress a five-volume biography, of which two have appeared: *Jefferson, The Virginian*, 1948, and *Jefferson and the Rights of Man*, 1951 (see also Malone's "Jefferson" in the *Dictionary of American Biography*). Other important studies are Adrienne Koch, *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson*, 1943, 1957; C. G. Bowers, *Jefferson and Hamilton*, 1925, and *Jefferson in Power*, 1936.

## The Declaration of Independence

In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

THE UNANIMOUS DECLARATION of the thirteen united STATES OF AMERICA.<sup>1</sup>

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.——We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.<sup>2</sup>—That to secure these rights, Govern-

1. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, on June 7, 1776, proposed a resolution in Congress that "these united Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States." Final action was postponed, but on June 11 a committee of five was appointed, which on June 28 presented the draft of a Declaration of Independence. It was substantially the work of Jefferson, although Franklin made fundamental contributions, and the influence of John Adams is evident. On July 2, Lee's original resolution was passed. On July 4, the Declaration was passed after some changes during debate; the Liberty Bell rang from the State House steeple in Philadelphia, and that night printed broadside copies were hastily run off for public distribution. On August 2, an engrossed parch-

ment copy was signed by all the delegates but three, who also signed shortly thereafter. Printed copies, with all the signatures, appeared in January, 1777. The philosophical and political ideals expressed in the Declaration can be traced far back in history, and their immediate roots are found in eighteenth-century thought, while the final draft represented a consensus among the delegates; however, the document still reflects the authorship of Jefferson, his precise clarity and powerful grace of thought. The text printed here is that authorized by the State Department: *The Declaration of Independence*, 1776 (1911).

2. Cf. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, where he identified natural rights as those to "life, liberty, and estate [property]."

ments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain<sup>3</sup> is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.—He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.—He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.—He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.—He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.—He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.—He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.—He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.—He has ob-

3. George III, king from 1760 to 1820, was the responsible engineer of those

policies of his government which evoked rebellion.

structed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.—He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.—He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.—He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.—He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.—He has combined with others<sup>4</sup> to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:—For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:—For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:—For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:—For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:—For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:—For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:—For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province,<sup>5</sup> establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:—For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:—For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.—He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us:—He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.—He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries<sup>6</sup> to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.—He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.—He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated

4. The British Parliament.

5. The Quebec Act (1774) promised concessions to the French Catholics, and restored the French civil law, thus alienating the Province of Quebec from the

seaboard colonies in the growing controversy.

6. German soldiers, principally Hessians, hired by the British for colonial service.

Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces<sup>7</sup> our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

WE, THEREFORE, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.—And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

1776

## First Inaugural Address<sup>8</sup>

Friends and Fellow-Citizens:

Called upon to undertake the duties of the first executive office of our country, I avail myself of the presence of that portion of my fellow-citizens which is here assembled, to express my grateful thanks

7. Proclaims.

8. In accordance with Article II of the Constitution, subsequently changed by the Twelfth Amendment, Jefferson had become vice-president in 1796, as the candidate defeated by the Federalist, John Adams. In 1800 he ran against Aaron Burr, both of them Democratic Republicans (Democrats). The electoral vote was a tie, a result that prompted

the adoption of the Twelfth Amendment. The election was settled by a vote in the House of Representatives, where Jefferson, supported by Hamilton, defeated Burr, whose resentment ultimately led to the Burr-Hamilton duel and Hamilton's death. The inauguration occurred on March 4, 1801, before the Congress, in the Senate Chamber of the still-unfinished Capitol.

for the favor with which they have been pleased to look towards me, to declare a sincere consciousness that the task is above my talents, and that I approach it with those anxious and awful presentiments which the greatness of the charge and the weakness of my powers so justly inspire. A rising nation spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye; when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.

Utterly, indeed, should I despair, did not the presence of many whom I here see remind me that in the other high authorities provided by our constitution I shall find resources of wisdom, of virtue, and of zeal on which to rely under all difficulties. To you then, gentlemen, who are charged with the sovereign functions of legislation, and to those associated with you, I look with encouragement for that guidance and support which may enable us to steer with safety the vessel in which we are all embarked, amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled sea.

During the contest of opinion<sup>9</sup> through which we have passed, the animation of discussions and of exertions has sometimes worn an aspect which might impose on strangers unused to think freely and to speak and to write what they think. But this being now decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution, all will, of course, arrange themselves under the will of the law, and unite in common efforts for the common good. All too will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression. Let us then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind; let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty, and even life itself, are but dreary things. And let us reflect that having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. During the throes and convulsions of the ancient world, during the agonizing spasms of infuriated man, seeking through blood and slaughter his long-lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore;<sup>1</sup> that this should be more

9. *I.e.*, the bitterly contested election.

1. The Reign of Terror (1794) in the French Revolution alarmed American

conservatives and intensified the strife between the parties.

felt and feared by some and less by others; and should divide opinions as to measures of safety. But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans; we are all federalists.<sup>2</sup> If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union, or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated, where reason is left free to combat it.<sup>3</sup> I know, indeed, that some honest men have feared that a republican government cannot be strong; that this Government is not strong enough. But would the honest patriot, in the full tide of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm, on the theoretic and visionary fear that this Government, the world's best hope, may by possibility want energy to preserve itself? I trust not. I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on earth. I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law would fly to the standard of the law; would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern. Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.

Let us then, pursue with courage and confidence our own federal and republican principles, our attachment to union and representative government. Kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe; too high-minded to endure the degradations of the others; possessing a chosen country, with room enough for our descendants to the hundredth and thousandth generation;<sup>4</sup> entertaining a due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties, to the acquisitions of our own industry, to honor and confidence from our fellow-citizens, resulting not from birth, but from our actions and their sense of them; enlightened by a benign religion, professed indeed and practiced in various forms yet all of them inculcating honesty, truth, temperance, gratitude, and the love of man, acknowledging and adoring an overruling Providence, which by all its dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here and his greater happiness hereafter: with all these blessings, what more is necessary to make us a happy and a prosperous people? Still one thing more, fellow-citizens—a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their

2. The two contesting political parties. The "Democratic Republicans" (the official name) were the ancestors of the Democratic party; Jefferson is referring not to politics but to common principles.  
3. This is probably the first important official recognition of the guarantee of

freedom of thought and opinion.

4. The pessimistic "law" of Malthus on the imbalance of population and subsistence had just been propounded in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798).

own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government; and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

About to enter, fellow-citizens, on the exercise of duties which comprehend everything dear and valuable to you, it is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principle of this government, and consequently those which ought to shape its administration. I will compress them in the narrowest compass they will bear, stating the general principle but not all its limitations. Equal and exact justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none;<sup>5</sup> the support of the state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns, and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies; the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet-anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people; a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of revolution, where peaceable remedies are unprovided; absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority, the vital principle of republics, from which is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism; a well-disciplined militia, our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them; the supremacy of the civil over the military authority—economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened; the honest payment of our debts, and sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid; the diffusion of information and arraignment of all abuses at the bar of the public reason; freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of person, under the protection of the habeas corpus;<sup>6</sup> and trial by juries impartially selected. These principles form the bright constellation which has gone before us, and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation. The wisdom of our sages and blood of our heroes have been devoted to their attainment; they should be the creed of our political faith; the text of civic instruction; the touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them in moments of error or alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety.

I repair then, fellow-citizens, to the post which you have assigned me. With experience enough in subordinate stations to know the difficulties of this, the greatest of all, I have learned to expect that it will rarely fall to the lot of imperfect man to retire from this sta-

5. Reaffirming Washington's injunction, in the "Farewell Address," that we must not "entangle our peace and prosperity"

in foreign alliances.

6. The guarantee that the individual will not be held under unlawful arrest.

tion with the reputation and the favor which bring him into it. Without pretensions to that high confidence you reposed in our first and greatest revolutionary character,<sup>7</sup> whose preëminent services had entitled him to the first place in his country's love, and had destined for him the fairest page in the volume of faithful history, I ask so much confidence only as may give firmness and effect to the legal administration of your affairs. I shall often go wrong through defect of judgment. When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground. I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional; and your support against the errors of others who may condemn what they would not, if seen in all its parts. The approbation implied by your suffrage is a great consolation to me for the past; and my future solicitude will be to retain the good opinion of those who have bestowed it in advance, to conciliate that of others by doing them all the good in my power, and to be instrumental to the happiness and freedom of all.

Relying then on the patronage of your good-will, I advance with obedience to the work, ready to retire from it whenever you become sensible how much better choice it is in your power to make. And may that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils to what is best, and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity.

1801

## *From Notes on the State of Virginia*<sup>8</sup>

[*A Southerner on Slavery*]<sup>9</sup>

There must doubtless be an unhappy influence on the manners of our people produced by the existence of slavery among us. The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this and learn to imitate it, for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave

7. George Washington.

8. *Notes on the State of Virginia* resulted from an official inquiry received by Jefferson in 1781, the year of his retirement as governor of his state. The Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, secretary of the French legation at Philadelphia, formulated a series of questions of interest to him in official negotiations. Jefferson's extended reply, in twenty-three sections, dealt with natural resources, geography, landscape, inhabitants (including the Indians), slavery, government,

laws and civil rights, education, religious freedom, social customs, and a number of other topics. Two hundred copies, dated 1782, were printed for private distribution in 1784-1785. The appearance of a French translation caused Jefferson to issue an authorized London edition in 1787, reprinted in Philadelphia in 1788. Additional material and notes appeared in the editions of 1800 and 1853.

9. From Query 18.



he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love for restraining the intemperance of passion toward his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded who, permitting one-half of the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and the *amor patriæ*<sup>1</sup> of the other. For if a slave can have a country in this world, it must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labor for another; in which he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavors to the evanishment of the human race, or entail<sup>2</sup> his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him. With the morals of the people, their industry also is destroyed. For in a warm climate, no man will labor for himself who can make another labor for him. This is so true that, of the proprietors of slaves, a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labor. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature, and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events; that it may become probable by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest. But it is impossible to be temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into everyone's mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution.<sup>3</sup> The spirit of the master is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way, I hope, preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.

1. Love of country.

2. A legal term meaning "to settle on an

heir" (as by bequest or inheritance).

3. *I.e.*, the American Revolution.

Letter to John Adams<sup>8</sup>[*The True Aristocracy*]

MONTICELLO, October 28, 1813.

\* \* \* I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. Formerly, bodily powers gave place among the aristoi.<sup>9</sup> But since the invention of gunpowder has armed the weak as well as the strong with missile death, bodily strength, like beauty, good humor, politeness and other accomplishments, has become but an auxiliary ground for distinction. There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society. May we not even say, that that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government? The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy. On the question, what is the best provision, you and I differ; but we differ as rational friends, using the free exercise of our own reason, and mutually indulging its errors. You think it best to put the pseudo-aristoi<sup>1</sup> into a separate chamber of legislation, where they may be hindered from doing mischief by their co-ordinate branches, and where, also, they may be a protection to wealth against the Agrarian and plundering enterprises of the majority of the people. I think that to give them power in order to prevent them from doing mischief, is arming them for it, and increasing instead of remedying the evil. For if the co-ordinate branches can arrest their action, so may they that of the co-ordinates. Mischief may be done negatively as well as positively. Of this, a cabal in the Senate of the United States has furnished many proofs. Nor do I

8. The Jefferson-Adams correspondence, comprising more than 150 letters, is one of the greatest in the annals of history. The two patriots had become estranged in politics; the Federalist Adams won the presidency in 1796, despite the opposition of Jefferson, who then succeeded him in 1801, when his Democratic Republican party bitterly attacked the conservatism of the Massachusetts incumbent. Reconciled in 1812, they exchanged their experienced wisdom on the issues of their world until they died, both on the anniversary of national in-

dependence, in 1826.

9. In Greek, literally, "the best." In two letters Adams has learnedly argued from ancient and recent examples that, without attention to aristocracy, "no society can pretend to establish a free government." \* \* \* The five pillars of aristocracy are beauty, wealth, birth, genius, and virtue"; but "any one of the first three" outweighs either or both of the others. Jefferson emphasizes genius and virtue.

1. See above, "artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth."

believe them necessary to protect the wealthy; because enough of these will find their way into every branch of the legislation, to protect themselves. From fifteen to twenty legislatures of our own, in action for thirty years past, have proved that no fears of an equalization of property are to be apprehended from them. I think the best remedy is exactly that provided by all our constitutions, to leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the aristoi from the pseudo-aristoi, of the wheat from the chaff. In general they will elect the really good and wise. In some instances, wealth may corrupt, and birth blind them; but not in sufficient degree to endanger the society.

It is probable that our difference of opinion may, in some measure, be produced by a difference of character in those among whom we lived. From what I have seen of Massachusetts and Connecticut myself, and still more from what I have heard, and the character given of the former by yourself (volume I, page 111),<sup>2</sup> who know them so much better, there seems to be in those two States a traditionary reverence for certain families, which has rendered the offices of the government nearly hereditary in those families. I presume that from an early period of your history, members of those families happening to possess virtue and talents, have honestly exercised them for the good of the people, and by their services have endeared their names to them. In coupling Connecticut with you, I mean it politically only, not morally. For having made the Bible the common law of their land, they seemed to have modeled their morality on the story of Jacob and Laban.<sup>3</sup> But although this hereditary succession to office with you, may, in some degree, be founded in real family merit, yet in a much higher degree, it has proceeded from your strict alliance of Church and State. These families are canonised in the eyes of the people on common principles, "you tickle me, and I will tickle you." In Virginia we have nothing of this. Our clergy, before the revolution, having been secured against rivalry by fixed salaries, did not give themselves the trouble of acquiring influence over the people. Of wealth, there were great accumulations in particular families, handed down from generation to generation, under the English law of entails.<sup>4</sup> But the only object of ambition for the wealthy was a seat in the King's Council. All their court then was paid to the crown and its creatures; and they Philipised<sup>5</sup> in all collisions between the King and the people. Hence they were unpopular; and that unpopularity continues attached to their names. A Randolph, a Carter,

2. Referring to Adams' *Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1797; earlier editions, London, 1787 and 1794).

3. Genesis xxvii-xxxi. A dynastic family was founded on the relations in marriage between Jacob and Laban's daughters.

4. An entailed estate could not be sold or given away and was passed on as a whole from generation to generation.

5. In reference to the leaders whom Philip II of Macedon bribed to support his policies intended to destroy the independence of the Greek cities.

or a Burwell must have great personal superiority over a common competitor to be elected by the people even at this day. At the first session of our legislature after the Declaration of Independence, we passed a law abolishing entails. And this was followed by one abolishing the privilege of primogeniture, and dividing the lands of intestates equally among all their children, or other representatives.<sup>6</sup> These laws, drawn by myself, laid the ax to the foot of pseudo-aristocracy. And had another which I prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been complete. It was a bill for the more general diffusion of learning. This proposed to divide every county into wards of five or six miles square, like your townships; to establish in each ward a free school for reading, writing and common arithmetic; to provide for the annual selection of the best subjects from these schools, who might receive, at the public expense, a higher degree of education at a district school; and from these district schools to select a certain number of the most promising subjects, to be completed at an University, where all the useful sciences should be taught. Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts. My proposition had, for a further object, to impart to these wards those portions of self-government for which they are best qualified, by confiding to them the care of their poor, their roads, police, elections, the nomination of jurors, administration of justice in small cases, elementary exercises of militia; in short, to have made them little republics, with a warden at the head of each, for all those concerns which, being under their eye, they would better manage than the larger republics of the county or State. A general call of ward meetings by their wardens on the same day through the State, would at any time produce the genuine sense of the people on any required point, and would enable the State to act in mass, as your people have so often done, and with so much effect by their town meetings. The law for religious freedom, which made a part of this system, having put down the aristocracy of the clergy, and restored to the citizen the freedom of the mind, and those of entails and descents nurturing an equality of condition among them, this on education would have raised the mass of the people to the high ground of moral respectability necessary to their own safety, and to orderly government; and would have completed the great object of qualifying them to select the veritable aristoi, for the trusts of government, to the exclusion of the pseudalists; and the same Theognis who has furnished the epigraphs of your two letters, assures us that Οὐδεμίαν πω Κίρν', ἀγαθοὶ πόλιν ὤλεσαν ἄνδρες.<sup>7</sup>

6. Jefferson had fostered this legislation against hereditary wealth in Virginia. Primogeniture secured the estate to the oldest son. Intestates are those who

leave no will and testament at death.

7. Good men, Curnus, have not yet destroyed any state (Theognis, I, 43).

Although this law has not yet been acted on but in a small and inefficient degree, it is still considered as before the legislature, with other bills of the revised code, not yet taken up, and I have great hope that some patriotic spirit will, at a favorable moment, call it up, and make it the keystone of the arch of our government.

With respect to aristocracy, we should further consider, that before the establishment of the American States, nothing was known to history but the man of the old world, crowded within limits either small or overcharged, and steeped in the vices which that situation generates. A government adapted to such men would be one thing; but a very different one, that for the man of these States. Here every one may have land to labor for himself, if he chooses; or, preferring the exercise of any other industry, may exact for it such compensation as not only to afford a comfortable subsistence, but wherewith to provide for a cessation from labor in old age. Every one, by his property, or by his satisfactory situation, is interested in the support of law and order. And such men may safely and advantageously reserve to themselves a wholesome control over their public affairs, and a degree of freedom, which, in the hands of the *canaille*<sup>8</sup> of the cities of Europe, would be instantly perverted to the demolition and destruction of everything public and private. The history of the last twenty-five years of France,<sup>9</sup> and of the last forty years in America, nay of its last two hundred years, proves the truth of both parts of this observation.

But even in Europe a change has sensibly taken place in the mind of man. Science had liberated the ideas of those who read and reflect, and the American example had kindled feelings of right in the people. An insurrection has consequently begun, of science, talents, and courage, against rank and birth, which have fallen into contempt. It has failed in its first effort, because the mobs of the cities, the instrument used for its accomplishment, debased by ignorance, poverty and vice, could not be restrained to rational action. But the world will recover from the panic of this first catastrophe. Science is progressive, and talents and enterprise on the alert. Resort may be had to the people of the country, a more governable power from their principles and subordination; and rank, and birth, and tinsel-aristocracy will finally shrink into insignificance, even there. This, however, we have no right to meddle with. It suffices for us, if the moral and physical condition of our own citizens qualifies them to select the able and good for the direction of their government, with a recurrence of elections at such short periods as will enable them to displace an unfaithful servant, before the mischief he meditates may be irremediable.

I have thus stated my opinion on a point on which we differ, not

8. Rabble.

9. *I.e.*, since the beginning of the French Revolution.

with a view to controversy, for we are both too old to change opinions which are the result of a long life of inquiry and reflection; but on the suggestions of a former letter of yours, that we ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other. We acted in perfect harmony, through a long and perilous contest for our liberty and independence. A constitution has been acquired, which, though neither of us thinks perfect, yet both consider as competent to render our fellow citizens the happiest and the securest on whom the sun has ever shone. If we do not think exactly alike as to its imperfections, it matters little to our country, which, after devoting to it long lives of disinterested labor, we have delivered over to our successors in life, who will be able to take care of it and of themselves.

Of the pamphlet on aristocracy which has been sent to you, or who may be its author, I have heard nothing but through your letter. If the person you suspect, it may be known from the quaint, mystical, and hyperbolic ideas, involved in affected, new-fangled and pedantic terms which stamp his writings. Whatever it be, I hope your quiet is not to be affected at this day by the rudeness or intemperance of scribblers; but that you may continue in tranquillity to live and to rejoice in the prosperity of our country, until it shall be your own wish to take your seat among the aristoi who have gone before you. Ever and affectionately yours.

## THE FEDERALIST

(1787-1788)

The essays of *The Federalist* were the product of an American crisis, written under pressure, as Hamilton said, "in the cabin of a Hudson River sloop; by the dim candle of country inn." The immediate urgency, in 1787, was for ratification of the Constitution of the United States, a document which had resulted from extended debate and vast compromises of opposed opinion in the Constitutional Convention. The eighty-five *Federalist* essays, all but eight of them published in New York periodicals between October, 1787, and May, 1788, accomplished much more than the influencing of ratification in

New York or other doubtful states. Recognized as the fundamental commentary on the Constitution, they have influenced American constitutional law from the time of the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, John Jay, who wrote at least five of them. They have served political science the world over as a principal statement of the theory of a republic; and finally, they have won lasting approval in the world literature of political philosophy.

The signature of "Publius" temporarily masked the collaboration of three powerful American statesmen. The authorship

of a number of the essays is still in doubt, and a few may have resulted from collaboration. Hamilton certainly instigated the project and is credited with thirty-five or more of the papers; Madison probably wrote thirty; and Jay, as before mentioned, certainly five.

*The Federalist* papers were first collected in *The Federalist: A Collection of Essays written in Favour of the New Constitution* \* \* \*, New York, 1788. Standard editions are those of Henry Cabot Lodge, 1891, P. L. Ford, 1898, and E. M. Earle, 1938. Selections, with a useful introduction and bibliography, are found in *Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson: Representative Selections*, edited by F. C. Prescott, American Writers Series, 1934. J. E. Cooke's complete edition (1960) is printed from the original text, with annotations.

## From No. IX

### [State Sovereignty and Federal Sovereignty]

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK:<sup>3</sup>

A firm Union will be of the utmost moment to the peace and liberty of the States, as a barrier against domestic faction and insurrection. \* \* \*

The utility of a Confederacy, as well to suppress faction and to guard the internal tranquillity of States, as to increase their external force and security, is in reality not a new idea. It has been practiced upon in different countries and ages, and has received the sanction of the most approved writers on the subject of politics. The opponents of the plan proposed have, with great assiduity, cited and circulated the observations of Montesquieu<sup>4</sup> on the necessity of a contracted territory for a republican government. But they seem not to have been apprised of the sentiments of that great man expressed in another part of his work, nor to have adverted to the consequences of the principle to which they subscribe with such ready acquiescence.

When Montesquieu recommends a small extent for republics, the standards he had in view were of dimensions far short of the limits of almost every one of these States. Neither Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina, nor Georgia can by any means be compared with the models from which he reasoned and to which the terms of his description apply. If we therefore take his ideas on this point as the criterion of truth, we shall be driven to the alternative either of taking refuge at once in the arms of monarchy, or of splitting ourselves into an infinity of little jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord, and the miserable objects of universal pity or contempt. Some of the writers who have come forward on the other side of the ques-

3. *The Federalist*, No. IX (written by Alexander Hamilton) appeared in the *Independent Journal*, New York, November 21, 1787.

4. Charles de Secondat, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu (1689-1755), French political philosopher; his *Spirit of Laws* is cited in Note 5.

tion seem to have been aware of the dilemma; and have even been bold enough to hint at the division of the larger States as a desirable thing. Such an infatuated policy, such a desperate expedient, might, by the multiplication of petty offices, answer the views of men who possess not qualifications to extend their influence beyond the narrow circles of personal intrigue, but it could never promote the greatness or happiness of the people of America.

Referring the examination of the principle itself to another place, as has been already mentioned, it will be sufficient to remark here that, in the sense of the author who has been most emphatically quoted upon the occasion, it would only dictate a reduction of the SIZE of the more considerable MEMBERS of the Union, but would not militate against their being all comprehended in one confederate government. And this is the true question, in the discussion of which we are at present interested.

So far are the suggestions of Montesquieu from standing in opposition to a general Union of the States, that he explicitly treats of a CONFEDERATE REPUBLIC as the expedient for extending the sphere of popular government, and reconciling the advantages of monarchy with those of republicanism.

"It is very probable" (says he<sup>s</sup>), "that mankind would have been obliged at length to live constantly under the government of a single person, had they not contrived a kind of constitution that has all the internal advantages of a republican, together with the external force of a monarchical government. I mean a CONFEDERATE REPUBLIC.

"This form of government is a convention by which several smaller *states* agree to become members of a larger *one*, which they intend to form. It is a kind of assemblage of societies that constitute a new one, capable of increasing, by means of new associations, till they arrive to such a degree of power as to be able to provide for the security of the united body.

"A republic of this kind, able to withstand an external force, may support itself without any internal corruptions. The form of this society prevents all manner of inconveniences.

"If a single member should attempt to usurp the supreme authority, he could not be supposed to have an equal authority and credit in all the confederate states. Were he to have too great influence over one, this would alarm the rest. Were he to subdue a part, that which would still remain free might oppose him with forces independent of those which he had usurped, and overpower him before he could be settled in his usurpation.

"Should a popular insurrection happen in one of the confederate states, the others are able to quell it. Should abuses creep into one

5. "*Spirit of Laws*, vol. i. book ix. chap. 1." [Publius' note].



part, they are reformed by those that remain sound. The state may be destroyed on one side, and not on the other; the confederacy may be dissolved, and the confederates preserve their sovereignty.

"As this government is composed of small republics, it enjoys the internal happiness of each; and with respect to its external situation, it is possessed, by means of the association, of all the advantages of large monarchies."

I have thought it proper to quote at length these interesting passages, because they contain a luminous abridgment of the principal arguments in favor of the Union, and must effectually remove the false impressions which a misapplication of other parts of the work was calculated to make. They have, at the same time, an intimate connection with the more immediate design of this paper; which is, to illustrate the tendency of the Union to repress domestic faction and insurrection.

A distinction, more subtle than accurate, has been raised between a *Confederacy* and a *consolidation* of the States. The essential characteristic of the first is said to be the restriction of its authority to the members in their collective capacities, without reaching to the individuals of whom they are composed. It is contended that the national council ought to have no concern with any object of internal administration. An exact equality of suffrage between the members has also been insisted upon as a leading feature of a confederate government. These positions are, in the main, arbitrary; they are supported neither by principle nor precedent. It has indeed happened that governments of this kind have generally operated in the manner which the distinction, taken notice of, supposes to be inherent in their nature; but there have been in most of them extensive exceptions to the practice, which serve to prove, as far as example will go, that there is no absolute rule on the subject. And it will be clearly shown, in the course of this investigation, that, as far as the principle contended for has prevailed, it has been the cause of incurable disorder and imbecility in the government.

The definition of a *Confederate Republic* seems simply to be "an assemblage of societies," or an association of two or more states into one state. The extent, modifications, and objects of the federal authority are mere matters of discretion. So long as the separate organization of the members be not abolished; so long as it exists, by a constitutional necessity, for local purposes; though it should be in perfect subordination to the general authority of the union, it would still be, in fact and in theory, an association of states, or a confederacy. The proposed Constitution, so far from implying an abolition of the State governments, makes them constituent parts of the national sovereignty, by allowing them a direct representation in the Senate, and leaves in their possession certain exclusive and very im-

portant portions of sovereign power. This fully corresponds, in every rational import of the terms, with the idea of a federal government.

In the Lycian confederacy, which consisted of twenty-three CITIES or republics, the largest were entitled to *three* votes in the COMMON COUNCIL, those of the middle class to *two*, and the smallest to *one*. The COMMON COUNCIL had the appointment of all the judges and magistrates of the respective CITIES. This was certainly the most delicate species of interference in their internal administration; for if there be anything that seems exclusively appropriated to the local jurisdictions, it is the appointment of their own officers. Yet Montesquieu, speaking of this association says: "Were I to give a model of an excellent Confederate Republic, it would be that of Lycia." Thus we perceive that the distinctions insisted upon were not within the contemplation of this enlightened civilian; and we shall be led to conclude, that they are the novel refinements of an erroneous theory.

PUBLIUS [Alexander Hamilton]

### *From No. X*

*[Majority Rule, Freedom for Minorities]*

#### TO THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK:<sup>6</sup>

Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. The friend of popular governments never finds himself so much alarmed for their character and fate as when he contemplates their propensity to this dangerous vice. He will not fail, therefore, to set a due value on any plan which, without violating the principles to which he is attached, provides a proper cure for it. The instability, injustice, and confusion introduced into the public councils have, in truth, been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have everywhere perished; as they continue to be the favorite and fruitful topics from which the adversaries to liberty derive their most specious declamations. The valuable improvements made by the American constitutions on the popular models, both ancient and modern, cannot certainly be too much admired; but it would be an unwarrantable partiality, to contend that they have as effectually obviated the danger on this side as was wished and expected. Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable; that the public good is dis-

6. *The Federalist*, No. X (written by James Madison) appeared in the New York *Daily Advertiser*, November 23, 1787.

regarded in the conflicts of rival parties; and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice, and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority. However anxiously we may wish that these complaints had no foundation, the evidence of known facts will not permit us to deny that they are in some degree true. It will be found, indeed, on a candid review of our situation, that some of the distresses under which we labor have been erroneously charged on the operation of our governments; but it will be found, at the same time, that other causes will not alone account for many of our heaviest misfortunes; and, particularly, for that prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements, and alarm for private rights, which are echoed from one end of the continent to the other. These must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administrations.

By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.

There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects.

There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.

It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an ailment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

The second expedient is as impracticable as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves. The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of

property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties.

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power, or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors and those who are debtors fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government. \* \* \*

The inference to which we are brought is that the causes of faction cannot be removed and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its effects.

If a faction consists of less than a majority, relief is supplied by the republican principle, which enables the majority to defeat its sinister views by regular vote. It may clog the administration, it may convulse the society; but it will be unable to execute and mask its violence under the forms of the Constitution. When a majority is included in a faction, the form of popular government, on the other hand, enables it to sacrifice to its ruling passion or interest both the public good and the rights of other citizens. To secure the public good, and private rights, against the danger of such a faction, and at the same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our inquiries are directed. Let me add that it is the great *desideratum*, by which alone this form of government can be rescued from the opprobrium under which it has

so long labored, and be recommended to the esteem and adoption of mankind.

By what means is this object attainable? Evidently by one of two only. Either the existence of the same passion or interest in a majority, at the same time, must be prevented; or the majority, having such co-existent passion or interest, must be rendered, by their number and local situation, unable to concert and carry into effect schemes of oppression. If the impulse and the opportunity be suffered to coincide, we well know that neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control. They are not found to be such on the injustice and violence of individuals, and lose their efficacy in proportion to the number combined together; that is, in proportion as their efficacy becomes needful.

From this view of the subject it may be concluded that a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert results from the form of government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property, and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would at the same time be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions.

A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking. Let us examine the points in which it varies from pure democracy, and we shall comprehend both the nature of the cure and the efficacy which it must derive from the union.

The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: First, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended.

The effect of the first difference is, on the one hand, to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will

be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves, convened for the purpose. On the other hand, the effect may be inverted. Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may by intrigue, by corruption, or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests of the people. The question resulting is, whether small or extensive republics are most favorable to the election of proper guardians of the public weal; and it is clearly decided in favor of the latter by two obvious considerations.

In the first place, it is to be remarked that, however small the republic may be, the representatives must be raised to a certain number, in order to guard against the cabals of a few; and that, however large it may be, they must be limited to a certain number, in order to guard against the confusion of a multitude. Hence, the number of representatives in the two cases not being in proportion to that of the constituents, and being proportionally greatest in the small republic, it follows that if the proportion of fit characters be not less in the large than in the small republic, the former will present a greater option, and consequently a greater probability of a fit choice.

In the next place, as each representative will be chosen by a greater number of citizens in the large than in the small republic, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practise with success the vicious arts, by which elections are too often carried; and the suffrages of the people, being more free, will be more likely to centre in men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.

It must be confessed that in this as in most other cases, there is a mean, on both sides of which inconveniences will be found to lie. By enlarging too much the number of electors, you render the representative too little acquainted with all their local circumstances and lesser interests; as by reducing it too much, you render him unduly attached to these, and too little fit to comprehend and pursue great and national objects. The federal Constitution forms a happy combination in this respect; the great and aggregate interests being referred to the national, the local and particular to the State, legislatures. \* \* \*

The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States. A religious sect may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it must secure the national councils against any danger from that source. A rage for paper money, for

an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper and wicked project will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the Union than a particular member of it; in the same proportion as such a malady is more likely to taint a particular county or district than an entire State.

In the extent and proper structure of the Union, therefore, we behold a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government. And according to the degree of pleasure and pride we feel in being republicans, ought to be our zeal in cherishing the spirit and supporting the character of federalists.

PUBLIUS [James Madison]

## PHILIP FRENEAU

(1752-1832)

Judged in his own time by his political opponents as "a writer of wretched and insolent doggerel, an incendiary journalist," Philip Freneau was nevertheless our second important poet. His double rôle as poet and political journalist in the transitional age of the Revolution is consistent with the contradictions of his poetry. Freneau was neoclassical by training and taste yet romantic in essential spirit. He was also at once a satirist and a sentimentalist, a humanitarian but also a bitter polemicist, a poet of Reason yet the celebrant of "lovely Fancy," and a deistic optimist most inspired by themes of death and transience.

Freneau was born on January 2, 1752, in New York, of French Huguenot and Scottish stock. He was tutored for Princeton ("that hotbed of Whiggery") where he established close friendships with a future president, James Madison, and a future novelist, Hugh Henry Brackenridge. In collaboration with the latter he produced his

earliest work; slightly later, in "The Power of Fancy" (1770), a genuine independence appears. After graduation and an unsatisfactory teaching experience, he gained his first popular success in New York in 1775 as a satirist of the British. In 1776 Freneau made his first voyage to the West Indies, where he wrote "The House of Night," foreshadowing the Gothic mood of Poe and Coleridge—F. L. Pattee calls it "the first distinctly romantic note heard in America"—and "The Beauties of Santa Cruz," blending the praise of nature with social protest in his characteristic later manner. This poetry foretold achievement of a distinguished order, but he was soon diverted from literature into the tide of revolution. As passenger on an American ship attacked by the British in 1780, he was taken prisoner. "The British Prison Ship" (1781), a good piece of invective, reveals the rigors and brutality of his captivity. In truth he now could say: "An age employed in edg-

ing steel / Can no poetic rapture feel." In the closing year of the war he became the prolific propagandist, celebrating American victories and leaders, while continuing to hurl his vitriol at the British in many poems. "The poet of the Revolution" they called him, a compliment not wholly to his advantage, since its persistence long obscured the fact that his later poems were his best, and these were quite different. The earlier poems were collected (1786) in *The Poems of Philip Freneau Written Chiefly During the Late War*.

For a few years, writing with sporadic fluency, Freneau earned his living variously as farmer, journalist, and sea captain. His *Miscellaneous Works*, essays and new poems, appeared in 1788. In 1790 he married, and almost literally flung himself, as political journalist, into the raging controversies between the Jeffersonian Democrats, whom he supported, and Hamilton's Federalists. In New York he edited the *Daily Advertiser*. In 1791, probably with Jefferson's support, he established in Philadelphia the *National Gazette*, and campaigned against the opinions of the powerful *Gazette of the United States*, edited by John Fenno, and supported by Hamilton. Simultaneously he served as translating clerk in Jefferson's Department of State. He was soon a power in journalism and politics. When Jefferson withdrew from politics temporarily in 1793, Freneau resigned and his paper failed, in the midst of a Federalist tide which ended only with Jefferson's election to the presidency in 1801. Fre-

neau's social and religious liberalism, in which he resembled Paine, gave the Federalists a deadly weapon against him; indeed his political enemies so besmirched his reputation that he has only recently been recognized as a courageous champion of American popular government.

Reduced in fortune and political ambition, he settled in 1794 at his plantation homestead, Mount Pleasant, near Frechold, New Jersey, where for a time he edited a New Jersey paper. On his own hand press he published new essays and poems, and revisions of earlier pieces. Collections appeared in 1795 and 1799. His poverty drove him at fifty to resume plowing the sea instead of his "sandy patrimony"; he was captain of coastwise trading vessels from 1803 to 1807. Again he turned to his farm for subsistence, but in 1818 his home burned down, and he gathered together the remnants of his family and possessions in a little farmhouse nearer town. In 1815 he collected the important poems of his later period, including the interesting work inspired by the War of 1812, in *A Collection of Poems \* \* \* Written Between the Year 1797 and the Present Time*. After he was seventy, he worked on the public roads; "he went," says Leary, "from house to house as tinker, mending clocks, and doing other small jobs of repairing." He continued almost until his death to send poems to the newspapers. Poor and nearly forgotten, he died of exposure in 1832 at the age of eighty, after losing his



way in a blizzard, as he returned,  
it is said, from a tavern.

The standard edition of the poetry is *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, 3 vols., edited by F. L. Pattee, 1902-1907. An excellent volume of selections is *Poems of Freneau*, edited by H. H. Clark, 1929. Additional poems are found in *The Last Poems of Philip Freneau*, edited by

Lewis Leary, 1946. Philip M. Marsh edited *The Prose of Philip Freneau*, 1955. H. H. Clark has published a facsimile of the 1799 edition of *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects*, 1943. An authoritative critical biography is *That Rascal Freneau: A Study in Literary Failure*, by Lewis Leary, 1941. Another biography is that of Pattee, in Volume I of his edition of the *Poems*; while H. H. Clark's edition contains a penetrating critical introduction.

## To the Memory of the Brave Americans<sup>2</sup>

UNDER GENERAL GREENE, IN SOUTH CAROLINA, WHO FELL  
IN THE ACTION OF SEPTEMBER 8, 1781.

At Eutaw Springs the valiant died;  
Their limbs with dust are covered o'er—  
Weep on, ye springs, your tearful tide;  
How many heroes are no more!

If in this wreck of ruin, they  
Can yet be thought to claim a tear,  
O smite your gentle breast, and say  
The friends of freedom slumber here!

5

Thou, who shalt trace this bloody plain,  
If goodness rules thy generous breast,  
Sigh for the wasted rural reign;  
Sigh for the shepherds, sunk to rest!

10

Stranger, their humble graves adorn;  
You too may fall, and ask a tear;  
'Tis not the beauty of the morn  
That proves the evening shall be clear.—

15

They saw their injured country's woe;  
The flaming town, the wasted field;  
Then rushed to meet the insulting foe;  
They took the spear—but left the shield.

20

Led by thy conquering genius, Greene,  
The Britons they compelled to fly;  
None distant viewed the fatal plain,  
None grieved, in such a cause to die—

2. General Nathaniel Greene's fine generalship in the South in 1781 was crucial. Although he lost several hundred men at Eutaw Springs, he prevented the relief

of Cornwallis, who surrendered at Yorktown on October 19. The poem appeared in the *Freeman's Journal*, November 21, 1781.

But, like the Parthian,<sup>3</sup> famed of old, 25  
 Who, flying, still their arrows threw,  
 These routed Britons, full as bold,  
 Retreated, and retreating slew.

Now rest in peace, our patriot band;  
 Though far from nature's limits thrown, 30  
 We trust they find a happier land,  
 A brighter sunshine of their own.

1781

1781, 1786

### The Wild Honey Suckle<sup>5</sup>

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,  
 Hid in this silent, dull retreat,  
 Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,  
 Unseen thy little branches greet:  
 No roving foot shall crush thee here, 5  
 No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white arrayed,  
 She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,  
 And planted here the guardian shade,  
 And sent soft waters murmuring by; 10  
 Thus quietly thy summer goes,  
 Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,  
 I grieve to see your future doom;  
 They died—nor were those flowers more gay, 15  
 The flowers that did in Eden bloom;  
 Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power  
 Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews  
 At first thy little being came: 20  
 If nothing once, you nothing lose,  
 For when you die you are the same;  
 The space between, is but an hour,  
 The frail duration of a flower.

1786

1786, 1788

3. The Parthians, famous cavalymen of ancient Persia, destroyed their enemies by feigning flight, then suddenly wheeling to discharge their arrows.

5. Then the popular name for a familiar shrub, *azalea viscosa*, sometimes "swamp honeysuckle." Cf. Emerson, "The Rhodora."

## The Indian Burying Ground

In spite of all the learned have said,  
I still my old opinion keep;  
The posture, that we give the dead,  
Points out the soul's eternal sleep.

Not so the ancients of these lands—  
The Indian, when from life released,  
Again is seated with his friends,  
And shares again the joyous feast.<sup>6</sup>

His imaged birds, and painted bowl,  
And venison, for a journey dressed,  
Bespeak the nature of the soul,  
Activity, that knows no rest.

His bow, for action ready bent,  
And arrows, with a head of stone,  
Can only mean that life is spent,  
And not the old ideas gone.

Thou, stranger, that shalt come this way,  
No fraud upon the dead commit—  
Observe the swelling turf, and say  
They do not lie, but here they sit.

Here still a lofty rock remains,  
On which the curious eye may trace  
(Now wasted, half, by wearing rains)  
The fancies of a ruder race.

Here still an aged elm aspires,  
Beneath whose far-projecting shade  
(And which the shepherd still admires)  
The children of the forest played!

There oft a restless Indian queen  
(Pale Shebah,<sup>7</sup> with her braided hair)  
And many a barbarous form is seen  
To chide the man that lingers there.

6. "The North American Indians bury their dead in a sitting posture; decorating the corpse with wampum, the images of birds, quadrupeds, &c: And (if that of a warrior) with bows, arrows, tom-hawks [*sic*], and other military weap-

ons" [Freneau's note].

7. The Queen of Sheba, a powerful Arabian country, paid a visit in homage to Solomon (I Kings x; II Chronicles ix) and became legendary in literature for her beauty and wisdom.

By midnight moons, o'er moistening dew;  
 In habit for the chase arrayed,  
 The hunter still the deer pursues, 35  
 The hunter and the deer, a shade!

And long shall timorous fancy see  
 The painted chief, and pointed spear,  
 And Reason's self shall bow the knee  
 To shadows and delusions here. 40

1787

1788

### On a Honey Bee

DRINKING FROM A GLASS OF WINE AND DROWNED THEREIN<sup>8</sup>

Thou, born to sip the lake or spring,  
 Or quaff the waters of the stream,  
 Why hither come, on vagrant wing?—  
 Does Bacchus tempting seem—  
 Did he for you this glass prepare?— 5  
 Will I admit you to a share?

Did storms harass or foes perplex,  
 Did wasps or king-birds bring dismay—  
 Did wars distress, or labors vex,  
 Or did you miss your way?— 10  
 A better seat you could not take  
 Than on the margin of this lake.

Welcome!—I hail you to my glass:  
 All welcome, here, you find;  
 Here, let the cloud of trouble pass, 15  
 Here, be all care resigned.—  
 This fluid never fails to please,  
 And drown the griefs of men or bees.

What forced you here we cannot know,  
 And you will scarcely tell— 20  
 But cheery we would have you go  
 And bid a glad farewell:  
 On lighter wings we bid you fly,  
 Your dart will now all foes defy.

Yet take not, oh! too deep a drink, 25  
 And in this ocean die;

8. Originally, "On a Bee Drinking from a Glass of Water" (*Time-Piece*, Sept. 6, 1797), this was twice revised, and

reprinted with the present title in *Poems* (1809).

Here bigger bees than you might sink,  
 Even bees full six feet high.  
 Like Pharaoh, then, you would be said  
 To perish in a sea of red.<sup>1</sup>

30

Do as you please, your will is mine;  
 Enjoy it without fear—  
 And your grave will be this glass of wine,  
 Your epitaph—a tear;  
 Go, take your seat on Charon's<sup>2</sup> boat,  
 We'll tell the hive, you died afloat.

35

1797, 1809

### To a Caty-Did<sup>3</sup>

In a branch of willow hid  
 Sings the evening Caty-did:  
 From the lofty locust bough  
 Feeding on a drop of dew,  
 In her suit of green array'd  
 Hear her singing in the shade  
 Caty-did, Caty-did, Caty-did!

5

While upon a leaf you tread,  
 Or repose your little head,  
 On your sheet of shadows laid,  
 All the day you nothing said:  
 Half the night your cheery tongue  
 Revell'd out its little song,  
 Nothing else but Caty-did.

10

From your lodgings on the leaf  
 Did you utter joy or grief?—  
 Did you only mean to say,  
 I have had my summer's day,  
 And am passing, soon, away  
 To the grave of Caty-did:—  
 Poor, unhappy Caty-did!

15

20

But you would have utter'd more  
 Had you known of nature's power—

1. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, attempting to pursue the Israelites across the Red Sea, lost his army by drowning (*Exodus* xiv: 1-27).

2. The ferryman of the dead.

3. "A well-known insect, when full grown, about two inches in length, and

of the exact color of a green leaf. It is of the genus cicada, or grasshopper kind, inhabiting the green foliage of trees and singing such a song as Caty-did in the evening, towards autumn" [*Freneau's note*].

From the world when you retreat,  
 And a leaf's your winding sheet, 25  
 Long before your spirit fled,  
 Who can tell but nature said,  
 Live again, my Caty-did!  
 Live and chatter, Caty-did.

Tell me, what did Caty do? 30  
 Did she mean to trouble you?—  
 Why was Caty not forbid  
 To trouble little Caty-did?—  
 Wrong, indeed at you to fling,  
 Hurting no one while you sing, 35  
 Caty-did! Caty-did! Caty-did!

Why continue to complain?  
 Caty tells me, she again  
 Will not give you plague or pain:—  
 Caty says you may be hid, 40  
 Caty will not go to bed  
 While you sing us Caty-did.  
 Caty-did! Caty-did! Caty-did!

But, while singing, you forgot  
 To tell us what did Caty not: 45  
 Caty-did not think of cold,  
 Flocks retiring to the fold,  
 Winter, with his wrinkles old,  
 Winter, that yourself foretold  
 When you gave us Caty-did. 50

Stay securely in your nest;  
 Caty now, will do her best,  
 All she can, to make you blest;  
 But, you want no human aid—  
 Nature, when she form'd you, said, 55  
 "Independent you are made,  
 My dear little Caty-did:  
 Soon yourself must disappear  
 With the verdure of the year,"—  
 And to go, we know not where, 60  
 With your song of Caty-did.

On the Universality and Other Attributes  
of the God of Nature<sup>4</sup>

All that we see, about, abroad,  
What is it all, but nature's God?  
In meaner works discovered here  
No less than in the starry sphere.

In seas, on earth, this God is seen; 5  
All that exist, upon him lean;  
He lives in all, and never strayed  
A moment from the works he made:

His system fixed on general laws  
Bespeaks a wise creating cause; 10  
Impartially he rules mankind  
And all that on this globe we find.

Unchanged in all that seems to change,  
Unbounded space is his great range;  
To one vast purpose always true, 15  
No time, with him, is old or new.

In all the attributes divine  
Unlimited perfectings shine;  
In these enwrapt, in these complete,  
All virtues in that centre meet. 20

This power doth all powers transcend,  
To all intelligence a friend,  
Exists, the greatest and the best<sup>5</sup>  
Throughout all the worlds, to make them blest.

All that he did he first approved, 25  
He all things into being loved;  
O'er all he made he still presides,  
For them in life, or death provides.

1815

4. Characteristic phrase of Deism, the rationalistic creed of Freneau now at sixty-three as in his youth.

5. "*Jupiter, optimus, maximus*.—Cicero"

[Freneau's note]. The comparison of pagan and Christian concepts of God was characteristic of Deism.



# The New Nation and the House Divided



The history of the United States from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Civil War had almost an epical character. During the early years the new nation successfully defended itself against the sniping of three foreign enemies, while such American statesmen as Washington and Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe slowly won for their country the respect if not the affection of European powers. Within a half century, American pioneers had pushed across the forest and mountain barriers, the great rivers and deserts, to the shores of the Pacific, and northwest into Alaska. The power, imagination, and opportunity quickened by political freedom and nationalism were expressed in the development, more rapid than ever before seen, of government, trade, shipping, manufactures, agricultural wealth and an expanding system of roads and waterways. While the material genius of the country expressed itself luxuriantly, cultural institutions, already strong in the colonies, expanded rapidly; and such authors as Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne,

Poe, Emerson, Longfellow, Melville, and Whitman forged a new literature, rich in native character and tradition, and recognized as American by the world at large. If American literature, like the European literature of the time, was romantic in character, it was not so by imitation, but by virtue of the abounding strangeness of this new continent, and the experience of a way of life in which, for a time, it seemed that the theoretical possibility of uninterrupted human progress might be concretely realized. And then, slowly revealed, the tragic flaw in the American state came into view, the widening, unhealing breach between the sections—and the appalling catastrophe of the Civil War rang down the curtain on an epoch.

## REGIONAL INFLUENCES

The city of New York, which by 1800, with a population of sixty thousand, had become the largest city in the United States, was destined to be for several decades the literary capital, the city of the so-called Knickerbocker authors, who derived this label from Washington Irving's



*Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809). Prominent among the Knickerbockers were many writers now of only minor interest: such poets as Drake and Halleck, and such men of letters as Charles Fenno Hoffman, Paulding, Verplanck, and Willis. Irving was the only author of this immediate group to achieve high literary distinction, but two other great New York writers, Bryant and Cooper, shared to some degree the Knickerbocker spirit. This spirit was a large-minded, romantic acceptance of life, ranging from Bryant's serious religion of nature to Irving's fantasy and burlesque, and encouraging, especially among its essayists, a worldly sophistication and witty gaiety. The New York theater flourished, and in the development of newspaper journalism the city soon led the nation.

Philadelphia, which had been called "the Athens of America" during the late colonial period, continued to produce literary works, but few of its writers rose to prominence, and many of the more talented found their way to New York, as they have been doing ever since. Philadelphia continued as the center of a new popular periodical literature, represented by *Godey's* and *Graham's*; it long remained an incubating ground for liberal ideas and humanitarian reform; and it maintained leadership in the development of science and technology. Meanwhile, the South built a flourishing agrarian civilization and a distinguished planter-aristocracy on the shaky foundations of slavery, while expending a great deal of its en-

ergy, and much of its traditional genius for statesmanship, in defending that doomed institution. At Richmond, and more importantly at Charleston, there developed small coteries of writers, but none were of national prominence except Poe and the Charlestonian William Gilmore Simms. The latter was greatly praised and widely popular, but today few beside the literary specialist are acquainted with his faintly Byronic poetry, or with his many novels of frontier adventure. Cooper has outlived this later rival because of his true sense of history and his creation of a few living characters.

In this first period of our national literature, however, the most spectacular development was the movement generally known as the "renaissance" of New England. It began in a new intellectualism, Unitarian and transcendental, which was crowned by the appearance of the works of Emerson in the late thirties, and by the later masterpieces of Thoreau. New England contributed vitally to the reform movements, especially abolition; it produced, in such figures as Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell, creators of a literature which combined a high democratic idealism with a patrician intellectual leadership.

#### ROMANTICISM

The remarkable and opulent literature which developed in various regions is best explained by reference to certain stirring events of our national history, infused by the surging romanticism which had its sources both at home and abroad. Roman-

ticism is not an organized system, but rather a particular attitude toward the realities of man, nature, and society. From the middle of the eighteenth century, the romantic spirit gradually strengthened, especially in Germany, France, and England; in English literature it flourished earlier than in America, particularly among such writers as Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron. In reaction against the neoclassical spirit, the romantic preferred freedom to formalism and emphasized individualism instead of authority. He exalted the imagination above either rationalism or strict fidelity to factual delineation. He rejected the validity of material reality in favor of innate or intuitive perception by the heart of man: "*intimations of immortality*" were taken to *prove* immortality. In consequence, the romantic gave faith and credence to ideality and elevation—to a reality that was considered more lofty, and truer, than the evidence of substantial things. Romantic reliance upon the importance of the subconscious, inner life was illustrated in Emerson's intuitionism, and also produced a profound interest in abnormal psychology, shown, for instance, by Poe and Hawthorne.

Yet in its view of nature, the romantic movement was essentially simple, as compared with that of rationalism: its universe was beautiful, and man was the chosen and favored creature in it, as in the nature poems of Wordsworth, Bryant, or Longfellow. In another manifestation, romanticism reveled in strange-

ness and mystery, producing in one direction the medievalism of Keats and Lowell, and in another the fantastic visions of Coleridge or Poe.

One impulse of romanticism was humanitarian; it romanticized the "common man"; it produced an age of reform movements; it developed a lavish enthusiasm for the primitive—for ancient ballads, epics, and folk literature, and for the "noble savage," usually in the idealization of the American Indian. In some manifestations, especially in America, it reveled in broad forms of humor and burlesque. In every country, romanticism produced a luxuriant new literature, with wide variations among authors, but everywhere certain characteristics persisted: opulence and freedom, devotion to individualism, a reliance upon the good of nature and "natural" man, and an abiding faith in the boundless resources of the human spirit and imagination.

Basically, the romantic spirit is rebellious; it thrives in turbulent times, in revolution and conflict; it encourages an optimistic expectation of improvement. These conditions of romanticism had been present in the American and French revolutions. The later period, which produced such American romantics as Bryant, Irving, and Cooper, was also a time of hopeful challenge. During the youth of this generation, the young republic asserted its independence over and over again: in two diplomatic victories over the French, in leading the world against the Barbary pirates, in resisting British pretensions by

war in 1812; and finally, in announcing its western hegemony by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Internally an even more astonishing accomplishment extended the American dominion from the Northwest Territory to Oregon, from Louisiana to the Rockies and (by means of the Mexican War in 1848), through the southwest from Texas to California. For such romantics as Bryant, Irving, Cooper, and their lesser emulators this expansion was a contagious influence, and these frontiers were an invitation to adventure, strongly reflected in their writings.

However, a number of our most powerful romantic authors had been brooding upon problems for which optimism and expansion provided no answers. In Poe and Hawthorne the spiritual questioning of romanticism found its first great American representatives. In their chief works they sought the reality of man in the hidden recesses of the mind and the spirit, and probed these obscure sources of behavior and moral judgment. Poe, like Keats and Coleridge, embodied his revelations in aesthetic symbolism, except in his tales of detection and science—a form of narrative that he invented. By contrast, Hawthorne, equipped with a penetrating sense of history, found his symbolism in man's conflict with the vestiges of the past, indelibly fixed in his moral nature and his social environment. Before Poe and Hawthorne, symbolic literature had appeared in America only in the expression of the rapt visions of early religious mystics, such as Edwards and

Woolman; now Poe especially carried symbolic idealism to a level so advanced that he became the inspiration for certain of the French symbolists, and hence a strong influence on the literary expression of the twentieth century. Melville, another great original, stands closer to the tradition of Hawthorne than to any other. Like Hawthorne, he was obsessed by the enigma of evil, but while the New Englander prevailingly took the Puritan morality as a point of departure, Melville drew symbols from land and sea for his explorations into the shadowed heart of the universe.

#### THE SPIRIT OF REFORM

Early in the nineteenth century the new republic began to experience the social disorders inevitably attendant upon its unprecedented expansion in territory, population, and industrial activity. American writers responded with a swelling tide of literature devoted to humanitarian reform movements. During the thirty years before the Civil War the population of the United States increased from thirteen to thirty million white Americans. Although nearly half of the nation's population had pushed beyond the Alleghenies by 1830, there were already at that time increasing concentrations in eastern urban and industrial centers, where recent immigrants accounted for about 12 per cent of the nation. The remarkable development of industry and financial institutions was accompanied by economic crises and a kind of poverty that the younger agrarian nation had not known. Even the frontier,

for all its glamor, adventure, and homestead land, was the scene of back-breaking labor, and of stringently limited educational and cultural opportunity. The election in 1800 of Jefferson, a patrician who trusted the people, has been regarded as breaking the ruling authority of "the rich, the well-born, and the able," and in 1828 the frontier elected its own popular hero, Andrew Jackson, with a direct mandate from the common people. The increasing determination of these masses to be heard in the national government remained a powerful influence against the entrenchment of monopoly and privilege. For these masses Negro slavery was an intolerable threat against the enterprise of free men; and the spirit of the frontier, no less than the moral abhorrence which impelled the North, was influential in precipitating the Civil War.

Respect for the common man and a belief in his capacities was a romantic assumption honored by writers on every hand. Bryant, as a great metropolitan editor, espoused human and civil rights, supported the nascent labor movement and many other reforms, and steadily opposed the extension of slavery. Hawthorne and Melville continued to regard the improvement of society as indispensable for the spirit of mankind. The transcendentalists in general resembled Thoreau rather than Emerson in their active and often rebellious participation in support of various reforms, and especially abolition. Fundamentally, if in varying measure, the reform spirit infused the writ-

ing of such New England Brahmins as Longfellow, Lowell, and even Holmes, while Whittier, a man of the people, spent himself, and perhaps mortgaged his artistic potential, in humanitarian causes. New reform movements and organizations flourished, and reform became a profession attracting talented and powerful leadership. Well-directed groups joined forces with British reformers to improve the standards of criminology, to abolish inhuman punishments and imprisonment for debt, to clean up the loathsome jails and provide rehabilitation instead of punishment. Societies for aid to the physically handicapped bore fruit in schools for the deaf and the blind, and asylums for the insane—Dorothea Dix added this interest to her earlier crusade for prison reform.

The American Temperance Society was founded in 1826, and many lecturers, some as prominent as Channing, Beecher, and Garrison, drew large audiences, while local church communities organized auxiliaries of pledge-signers. The women's rights movement drew such strong leaders as Margaret Fuller, journalist of transcendentalism, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott. In 1848, the movement rose to the national scale with the meeting of the first women's congress at Seneca Falls, New York. Women crusaded for equality with men in educational opportunities and employment, in marriage and property ownership; and they were a vigorous auxiliary to the temperance

movement and to the campaigns for factory reforms affecting women and child workers, especially in the New England cotton mills.

#### TRANSCENDENTALISM

The many important modifications in religious doctrine and in sectarian organizations, especially among Protestant denominations, were of importance for literature principally in New England, where a strong intellectualist mysticism among Unitarian thinkers stimulated the transcendental movement. Even so, Unitarianism and transcendentalism became a concern of our major literature only because of the great stature of Emerson and Thoreau. All other transcendental writers, for example, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, the Channings, and Orestes Brownson, were at most of secondary importance.

Yet for the history of ideas in the United States, transcendentalism wrote an important chapter. It was the expression for one age of an intuitionist idealism which has taken various forms in American thought as a counter-current to rationalistic and authoritarian orthodoxies from early times; whether among dissenters from Puritanism, or Puritan and Quaker mystics, or, as late as 1897, in William James's hypothesis of a "Will to Believe."

Transcendentalism was a philosophical dissent from Unitarianism, which represented the compromise of rational Deism with Calvinism, retaining the rationalists' acceptance of liberal scientific thought, and rejecting extreme concepts concerning the

original depravity and the inherited guilt of man. In Unitarianism the Godhead was conceived as Unity, not Trinity; it was the human potential in the acts and words of Jesus that gave them sublime importance; and the Holy Ghost was the divine spark in every man. The rising young transcendentalists asserted that the Unitarian creed had become conventional and complacent in its orthodox fidelity to Christian dogmas of supernaturalism. Transcendentalists rejected Locke's materialistic psychology in favor of the idealism of the German thinker Immanuel Kant (*The Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781), who declared that the "transcendental" knowledge in the mind of man was innate, or a *priori*; the transcendentalists interpreted this view as supporting the belief that intuition surpassed reason as a guide to the truth. Thus they evolved a theological monism, in which the divine immanence of God coexisted with the universe and the individual; they asserted the doctrine of correspondence between the microcosm of the individual mind and the macrocosmic Oversoul of the universe; and hence they derived an enlarged conception of the sanctity of the individual and his freedom to follow his intuitionist knowledge.

American transcendentalists were influenced by such British writers as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle; they drew on such German idealistic philosophers as Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling, and on the writings of Goethe, Richter, Herder, and others; they sought confir-

mation among the ancients: the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, the Neoplatonists, and the Hindu wisdom of the age-old Vedas. They read the Christian mystics from the Middle Ages to Swedenborg.

The Transcendental Club, an informal group, met oftenest at Emerson's Concord home, and its members were chiefly responsible for *The Dial* (1840-1844), the famous little magazine that Emerson edited for two of its four years. One group of transcendentalists concerned themselves with reform movements and social revolt; Thoreau is the most noteworthy of these in respect to literary values. Brook Farm (1841) and Fruitlands (1842) were agrarian experiments in communal living supported briefly by transcendentalists concerned with the social order.

#### INEVITABLE CONFLICT

From colonial days, antislavery leaders had preached gradual emancipation; but in 1831, a group led by William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the newly founded abolition magazine, *The Liberator*, had formed the militant New England Anti-Slavery Society. Two years later, all such organizations met together in Philadelphia to found the American Anti-Slavery So-

ciety. Among the many who attended was Whittier, who thereafter gave the bulk of his limited strength to the cause. The crusade for abolition was carried on in press and pulpit, and on the lecture platform. The succeeding events are too well-known to require formal discussion.

When the Mexican War threatened, Lowell abandoned the dream world of *Sir Launfal* and lighted the caustic flame of the *Biglow Papers*. Longfellow's "Building of the Ship," like Whittier's "Ichabod," reveals the varied emotional reactions of the period. Thoreau's resistance to the Mexican War involved an act of civil disobedience, and he then published the famous essay of that title, initiating a philosophy of pacific resistance. Upon the enactment of the strengthened Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, even the pacifistic Emerson wrote firmly in his *Journal*, "I will not obey it, by God." Act by act, as the following texts reveal, our literature reflects the later events of the drama: the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the Kansas insurrections, John Brown's life and death, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the disruption of the Democrats, the new Republican party, the election of Lincoln, and the war itself.



# Romantic Rediscovery: Nature, Man, Society

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WASHINGTON IRVING

(1783-1859)

As a writer, Washington Irving was so naturally endowed that he seemed to drift into his career at the whim of circumstances and his own inclinations. Humorists are always likely to be taken for granted, and there has been no searching revaluation of Irving such as should have been provoked by the perceptive biography by Stanley T. Williams (1935). Actually, with Poe and Hawthorne, Irving has survived all other American writers of fiction before Melville, and he still finds new readers with every passing generation. He was the first great prose stylist of American romanticism, and his familiar style was destined to outlive the formal prose of such contemporaries as Scott and Cooper, and to provide a model for the prevailing prose narrative of the future.

The apparent ease of his writing is not simply that of the gifted amateur; it results from his purposeful identification of his whole personality with what he wrote. He was urbane and

worldly, yet humorous and gentle; a robust connoisseur, yet innately reserved; a patrician, yet sympathetic toward the people. His vast reading, following only the impulse of his own enthusiasms, resulted in a rich if random literary inheritance, revealed in all that he wrote. His response to the period of Addison, Swift, and Johnson, with its great and graceful style, and his enthusiasm for the current European romanticism, enabled him to combine these with his independent literary personality and American roots.

It is instructive to consider the number of his literary innovations. He was our first great belletrist, writing always for pleasure, and to produce pleasure; yet readers of all classes responded to him in a country in which the didactic and utilitarian had formerly prevailed. He gave an impetus both to the extravagant American humor of which Mark Twain became the classic, and to the urbane wit that has survived in writers rang-

ing from Holmes and Lowell to the *New Yorker* wits of the present century. In his *Sketch Book* appeared the first modern short stories and the first great American juvenile literature. He was among the first of the moderns to write good history and biography as literary entertainment. He introduced the familiar essay to America. On his own whimsical terms, Irving restored the waning Gothic romances which Poe soon infused with psychological subtleties. The scope of his life and his writing was international, and produced a certain breadth of view in his readers; yet his best-known stories awakened an interest in the life of American regions from the Hudson valley to the prairies of the West. His influence abroad, as writer, as visitor, and as diplomat, was that of a gifted cultural ambassador, at home on both continents, at a time when his young country badly needed such representation. He was the only American writer of his generation who could chide the British in an atmosphere of good humor.

The events of Irving's life are characterized by the same casual approach and distinguished results. Gently born and well educated, the youngest of eleven children of a prosperous New York merchant, he began a genteel reading for the law at sixteen, but preferred a literary Bohemianism. At nineteen he published, in his brother's newspaper, his "Jonathan Oldstyle" satires of New York life. By the age of twenty-three, when he was admitted to the New York bar, he had roamed the Hudson val-

ley and been a literary vagabond in England, Holland, France, and Italy, reading and studying what pleased him, which was a great deal, and reveling in the gay world of the theater. Back in New York, he joined with his brother, William, and James Kirke Paulding, in 1807, in producing the *Salmagundi* papers, Addisonian commentaries on New York society and frivolities. *A History of New York, by Diedrich Knickerbocker* (1809), a rollicking burlesque of a current serious history of the early Dutch settlers, has become a classic of humor, and might have launched an immediate career for its author.

A personal tragedy, however, changed his course for a time; the death of his fiancée, Matilda Hoffman, coincided with the demands of the family cutlery firm, and in 1810 he went to Washington as representative of the business. In 1815 he again turned restlessly to his European roving, with headquarters in England during the next seventeen years, but his literary career was soon to catch up with him again. In 1818 the failure of the Irving firm, which had bountifully supported his leisure, threw family responsibilities upon him, and he loyally plunged into the authorship for which he had almost unconsciously prepared himself. The *Sketch Book* appeared serially in 1819-1820, and in volume form shortly thereafter it at once had an international success. *Bracebridge Hall* followed in 1822; then he first went to Germany in pursuit of an interest in German romanticism, which flavored the *Tales*



of a Traveller (1824) and other later writings. Meanwhile in Paris he had met John Howard Payne, the American dramatist and actor; his collaboration with him resulted brilliantly in *Charles the Second; or The Merry Monarch*, one of the most successful social comedies of its time.

From 1826 to 1829 he was in Spain on diplomatic business, residing for a time in the Alhambra. His reading at that period, including the study of Spanish historical sources, resulted in a number of important works: *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* (1829), *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (1831), a famous volume of stories and sketches—*The Alhambra* (1832), and “Legends of the Conquest of Spain” (in *The Crayon Miscellany*, 1835).

Before *The Alhambra* appeared, he was on his way back to the United States after two years as secretary of the American legation in London (1829–1831). American reviewers had commented, often with irritation, on his seeming preference for Europe, but the charges were exaggerated. After seventeen years abroad he returned with the desire to portray his own country again, and although such western adventures as *A Tour of the Prairies* (1835), *Astoria* (history of Astor’s fur trade, 1836), and *The Adventures of Captain*

*Bonneville* (explorations in the Rocky Mountains, 1837), are not among his best work, they broke new trails in our literature. In 1836 he made his home at Sunnyside, near Tarrytown, so lovingly described years before as “Sleepy Hollow.” He had already declined a nomination to Congress; now he declined to run for mayor of New York, or to become Van Buren’s secretary of the navy. Instead he wrote a good *Life of Oliver Goldsmith* (1840), and began the *Life of George Washington* (published 1855–1859), long a standard work. From 1842 to 1845 he served as minister to Spain, then settled at Sunnyside, which he remodeled and enlarged, while preparing the revised edition of his works, and completing his *Washington*. The fifth and last volume of the latter appeared just before his death in 1859.

The standard edition of Irving’s work is *The Works of Washington Irving*, Author’s Uniform Revised Edition, 21 vols., 1860–1861, reissued in 12 vols., 1881, the source of the texts here reprinted. *The Journals of Washington Irving*, 3 vols., 1919, were edited by W. P. Trent and G. S. Hellman, and a number of volumes of the letters have been published. Several later editions of Irving’s works, and editions of individual volumes, are easily available; note especially *Knickerbocker’s History of New York*, edited by Stanley T. Williams and Tremaine McDowell, 1927. *Washington Irving: Representative Selections*, edited by Henry A. Pochmann, American Writers Series, 1934, has a useful introduction and bibliography.

Pierre M. Irving published the first standard *Life and Letters* \* \* \*, 4 vols., 1862–1864; other good lives are those by Charles Dudley Warner, 1890, and G. S. Hellman, 1925. However, the definitive biographical and critical study is that by Stanley T. Williams: *The Life of Washington Irving*, 2 vols., 1935.

From A History of New York, by  
Diedrich Knickerbocker<sup>1</sup>

Book III: In Which Is Recorded the Golden Reign  
of Wouter Van Twiller

CHAPTER I: OF THE RENOWNED WOUTER VAN TWILLER<sup>2</sup> \* \* \*

\* \* \*

It was in the year of our Lord 1629<sup>6</sup> that Mynheer Wouter Van Twiller was appointed governor of the province of Nieuw Nederlandts, under the commission and control of their High Mightinesses the Lords States General of the United Netherlands, and the privileged West India Company.

This renowned old gentleman arrived at New Amsterdam in the merry month of June, the sweetest month in all the year; when Dan Apollo seems to dance up the transparent firmament—when the robin, the thrush, and a thousand other wanton songsters make the woods to resound with amorous ditties, and the luxurious little hobblincon revels among the clover blossoms of the meadows—all which happy coincidence persuaded the old dames of New Amsterdam, who were skilled in the art of foretelling events, that this was to be a happy and prosperous administration.

The renowned Wouter (or Walter) Van Twiller, was descended from a long line of Dutch burgomasters, who had successively dozed away their lives, and grown fat upon the bench of magistracy in Rotterdam; and who had comported themselves with such singular wisdom and propriety, that they were never either heard or talked of—which, next to being universally applauded, should be the object of ambition of all magistrates and rulers. There are two opposite ways by which some men make a figure in the world; one by talking faster than they think; and the other by holding their tongues and not thinking at all. By the first, many a smatterer acquires the reputation of a man of quick parts; by the other, many a dunderpate, like the

1. Published on December 6, 1809, simultaneously in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Charleston, this work was conceived as a parody of a serious history—Samuel Mitchell's *Picture of New York* (1807). But the element of parody was almost lost in the gusty independence of Irving's burlesque, a classic of humorous literature. In the comic treatment of the early Dutch governors there are satirical resemblances to the persons and policies of American leaders—especially John Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. (See the verbatim reprint of 1809 text, with notes by Stanley T. Williams and Tremaine McDowell, 1927; and the Notes, pp. 379–383, in Pochmann's *Washington Irving: Repre-*

*sentative Selections*, 1934.) In several revisions Irving refined the broadest extravagances of the first text. His last edition (1848) is followed here. The work is in eight books. The first two, ridiculing pedantry and solemnity in historical writing, are a burlesque history of the world from the Creation to the establishment of New Amsterdam. The subsequent books deal with governors Wouter Van Twiller (in the section here given in part), William the Testy, and Peter Stuyvesant "the Headstrong."

2. Wouter Van Twiller (1580?–1656), Dutch governor of New Netherland, 1633–1637.

6. Actually 1633. Van Twiller was not, as Irving suggests, the first governor.

owl, the stupidest of birds, comes to be considered the very type of wisdom. This, by the way, is a casual remark, which I would not, for the universe, have it thought I apply to Governor Van Twiller. It is true he was a man shut up within himself, like an oyster, and rarely spoke except in monosyllables; but then it was allowed he seldom said a foolish thing. So invincible was his gravity that he was never known to laugh or even to smile through the whole course of a long and prosperous life. Nay if a joke were uttered in his presence, that set light minded hearers in a roar, it was observed to throw him into a state of perplexity. Sometimes he would deign to inquire into the matter, and when, after much explanation, the joke was made as plain as a pike-staff, he would continue to smoke his pipe in silence, and at length, knocking out the ashes would exclaim, "Well! I see nothing in all that to laugh about."

With all his reflective habits, he never made up his mind on a subject. His adherents accounted for this by the astonishing magnitude of his ideas. He conceived every subject on so grand a scale that he had not room in his head to turn it over and examine both sides of it. Certain it is that if any matter were propounded to him on which ordinary mortals would rashly determine at first glance, he would put on a vague, mysterious look; shake his capacious head; smoke some time in profound silence, and at length observe that "he had his doubts about the matter"; which gained him the reputation of a man slow of belief and not easily imposed upon. What is more, it gained him a lasting name: for to this habit of the mind has been attributed his surname of Twiller; which is said to be a corruption of the original *Twijfeler*, or, in plain English, *Doubter*.

The person of this illustrious old gentleman was formed and proportioned, as though it had been moulded by the hands of some cunning Dutch statuary,<sup>7</sup> as a model of majesty and lordly grandeur. He was exactly five feet six inches in height, and six feet five inches in circumference. His head was a perfect sphere, and of such stupendous dimensions, that dame Nature, with all her sex's ingenuity, would have been puzzled to construct a neck capable of supporting it; wherefore she wisely declined the attempt, and settled it firmly on the top of his back bone, just between the shoulders. His body was oblong and particularly capacious at bottom; which was wisely ordered by Providence, seeing that he was a man of sedentary habits, and very averse to the idle labor of walking. His legs were short, but sturdy in proportion to the weight they had to sustain; so that when erect he had not a little the appearance of a beer barrel on skids. His face, that infallible index of the mind, presented a vast expanse, unfurrowed by any of those lines and angles which disfigure the human countenance with what is termed expression. Two small grey eyes

7. Then meaning "sculptor."

twinkled feebly in the midst, like two stars of lesser magnitude in a hazy firmament; and his full-fed cheeks, which seemed to have taken toll of every thing that went into his mouth, were curiously mottled and streaked with dusky red, like a spitzenberg apple.

His habits were as regular as his person. He daily took his four stated meals, appropriating exactly an hour to each; he smoked and doubted eight hours, and he slept the remaining twelve of the four and twenty. Such was the renowned Wouter Van Twiller—a true philosopher, for his mind was either elevated above, or tranquilly settled below, the cares and perplexities of this world. He had lived in it for years, without feeling the least curiosity to know whether the sun revolved round it, or it round the sun; and he had watched, for at least half a century, the smoke curling from his pipe to the ceiling, without once troubling his head with any of those numerous theories, by which a philosopher would have perplexed his brain, in accounting for its rising above the surrounding atmosphere.

In his council he presided with great state and solemnity. He sat in a huge chair of solid oak, hewn in the celebrated forest of the Hague, fabricated by an experienced timmerman<sup>8</sup> of Amsterdam, and curiously carved about the arms and feet, into exact imitations of gigantic eagle's claws. Instead of a sceptre he swayed a long Turkish pipe, wrought with jasmin and amber, which had been presented to a stadtholder<sup>9</sup> of Holland, at the conclusion of a treaty with one of the petty Barbary powers.<sup>1</sup> In this stately chair would he sit, and this magnificent pipe would he smoke, shaking his right knee with a constant motion, and fixing his eye for hours together upon a little print of Amsterdam, which hung in a black frame against the opposite wall of the council chamber. Nay, it has even been said, that when any deliberation of extraordinary length and intricacy was on the carpet, the renowned Wouter would shut his eyes for full two hours at a time, that he might not be disturbed by external objects—and at such times the internal commotion of his mind was evinced by certain regular guttural sounds, which his admirers declared were merely the noise of conflict, made by his contending doubts and opinions.

It is with infinite difficulty I have been enabled to collect these biographical anecdotes of the great man under consideration. The facts respecting him were so scattered and vague, and divers of them so questionable in point of authenticity, that I have had to give up the search after many, and decline the admission of still more, which would have tended to heighten the coloring of his portrait.

I have been the more anxious to delineate fully the person and habits of Wouter Van Twiller, from the consideration that he was

8. Dutch, "cabinetmaker."

9. Dutch, "governor."

1. The Barbary States of North Africa,

whose centuries of piracy on Christian shipping Jefferson had just quelled in expeditions, 1801–1805.

not only the first, but also the best governor that ever presided over this ancient and respectable province; and so tranquil and benevolent was his reign, that I do not find throughout the whole of it, a single instance of any offender being brought to punishment—a most indubitable sign of a merciful governor, and a case unparalleled, excepting in the reign of the illustrious King Log,<sup>2</sup> from whom, it is hinted, the renowned Van Twiller was a lineal descendant. \* \* \*

CHAPTER IV: CONTAINING FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE GOLDEN AGE, AND WHAT CONSTITUTED A FINE LADY AND GENTLEMAN IN THE DAYS OF WALTER THE DOUBTER

In this dulcet period of my history, when the beauteous island of Manna-hata presented a scene, the very counterpart of those glowing pictures drawn of the golden reign of Saturn,<sup>7</sup> there was, as I have before observed, a happy ignorance, an honest simplicity prevalent among its inhabitants, which, were I even able to depict, would be but little understood by the degenerate age for which I am doomed to write. Even the female sex, those arch innovators upon the tranquillity, the honesty, and gray-beard customs of society, seemed for a while to conduct themselves with incredible sobriety and comeliness.

Their hair, untortured by the abominations of art, was scrupulously pomatumed back from their foreheads with a candle, and covered with a little cap of quilted calico, which fitted exactly to their heads. Their petticoats of linsey-woolsey were striped with a variety of gorgeous dyes—though I must confess these gallant garments were rather short, scarce reaching below the knee; but then they made up in the number, which generally equalled that of the gentleman's small clothes; and what is still more praiseworthy, they were all of their own manufacture—of which circumstance, as may well be supposed, they were not a little vain.

These were the honest days in which every woman staid at home, read the Bible, and wore pockets—ay, and that too of a goodly size, fashioned with patchwork into many curious devices, and ostentatiously worn on the outside. These, in fact, were convenient receptacles, where all good housewives carefully stored away such things as they wished to have at hand; by which means they often came to be incredibly crammed—and I remember there was a story current when I was a boy that the Lady of Wouter Van Twiller once had occasion to empty her right pocket in search of a wooden ladle, when the contents filled a couple of corn baskets, and the utensil was discov-

2. See "The Frogs Desiring a King," in *Aesop's Fables*. The gods appointed a log, which served them silently; they grew dissatisfied, and were sent a stork, which ate them.

7. Roman mythology deified Saturn, fabled as king of an aboriginal "golden age," and as god of the seed-sowing; hence there is a double analogy with the epoch of Van Twiller.

ered lying among some rubbish in one corner—but we must not give too much faith to all these stories; the anecdotes of those remote periods being very subject to exaggeration. \* \* \*

From the sketch here given, it will be seen that our good grandmothers differed considerably in their ideas of a fine figure from their scantily dressed descendants of the present day. A fine lady, in those times, waddled under more clothes, even on a fair summer's day, than would have clad the whole bevy of a modern ball-room. Nor were they the less admired by the gentlemen in consequence thereof. On the contrary, the greatness of a lover's passion seemed to increase in proportion to the magnitude of its object—and a voluminous damsel arrayed in a dozen of petticoats, was declared by a Low Dutch\* sonneteer of the province to be radiant as a sunflower, and luxuriant as a full-blown cabbage. Certain it is, that in those days the heart of a lover could not contain more than one lady at a time; whereas the heart of a modern gallant has often room enough to accommodate half a dozen. The reason of which I conclude to be, that either the hearts of the gentlemen have grown larger, or the persons of the ladies smaller—this, however, is a question for physiologists to determine.

But there was a secret charm in these petticoats, which, no doubt, entered into the consideration of the prudent gallants. The wardrobe of a lady was in those days her only fortune; and she who had a good stock of petticoats and stockings, was as absolutely an heiress as is a Kamschatka<sup>9</sup> damsel with a store of bearskins, or a Lapland belle with a plenty of reindeer. The ladies, therefore, were very anxious to display these powerful attractions to the greatest advantage; and the best rooms in the house, instead of being adorned with caricatures of dame Nature, in water colors and needle work, were always hung round with abundance of homespun garments, the manufacture and the property of the females—a piece of laudable ostentation that still prevails among the heiresses of our Dutch villages. \* \* \*

Such was the happy reign of Wouter Van Twiller, celebrated in many a long forgotten song as the real golden age, the rest being nothing but counterfeit copper-washed coin. In that delightful period, a sweet and holy calm reigned over the whole province. The burgomaster smoked his pipe in peace—the substantial solace of his domestic cares, after her daily toils were done, sat soberly at the door, with her arms crossed over her apron of snowy white, without being insulted with ribald street walkers or vagabond boys—those unlucky urchins who do so infest our streets, displaying, under the roses of youth, the thorns and briars of iniquity. Then it was that the

8. That is, of Holland; cf. the "Low Countries" (Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg).

9. A Russian peninsula on the Bering Sea.

lover with ten brecches, and the damsel with petticoats of half a score, indulged in all the innocent endearments of virtuous love without fear and without reproach; for what had that virtue to fear, which was defended by a shield of good linsey-woolseys, equal at least to the seven bull hides of the invincible Ajax?<sup>6</sup>

Ah blissful, and never to be forgotten age! when every thing was better than it has ever been since, or ever will be again—when Buttermilk Channel<sup>7</sup> was quite dry at low water—when the shad in the Hudson were all salmon, and when the moon shone with a pure and resplendent whiteness, instead of that melancholy yellow light which is the consequence of her sickening at the abominations she every night witnesses in this degenerate city! \* \* \*

1809, 1860–1861

## Rip Van Winkle<sup>4</sup>

A POSTHUMOUS WRITING OF DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER

*By Woden,<sup>5</sup> God of Saxons,  
From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday.  
Truth is a thing that ever I will keep*

*Unto thylke day in which I creep into  
My sepulchre—*

CARTWRIGHT<sup>8</sup>

[The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore, so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he hap-

6. Referring to the legendary shield of Ajax, one of the greatest warriors of the Greeks in the siege of Troy; cf. Homer's *Iliad*.

7. In New York harbor, between Governor's Island and Long Island (Brooklyn).

4. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* appeared in seven installments in New York, 1819–1820, including a maximum of thirty-six pieces—the count varies slightly in later collections. All but two, says Irving, “were written in England,” but, “circumstances compelled me to send them piece-meal to the United States”—a reference, no doubt, to the failure of the Irving business in 1818, which caused him again to turn to his pen for support. The bulk of these pieces, appreciative if whimsical essays on English life, manners, and tradition,

confirmed his position as unofficial ambassador of good will to the mother country, while he did not sacrifice his strong American preferences. *Rip Van Winkle* (ending the first installment of the *Sketch Book*) has been regarded as the first American short story. Within ten years (1829) it began in Philadelphia its long stage career. This involved adaptations and inheritance by many authors and actors, until it was stabilized in the version acted by the third Joseph Jefferson (1829–1905).

5. Sometimes Wodan or Odin; in Norse and Teutonic mythology, the god of war and wisdom—also “the Thunderer.”

8. William Cartwright (1611–1643), short-lived prodigy of the “Tribe of Ben,” of whom Jonson said, “My son Cartwright writes all like a man.”

pened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black-letter, and studied it with the zeal of a book-worm.<sup>7</sup>

The result of all these researches was a history of the province during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all historical collections, as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work, and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say that his time might have been much better employed in weightier labors. He, however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way; and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbors, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection; yet his errors and follies are remembered "more in sorrow than in anger,"<sup>8</sup> and it begins to be suspected, that he never intended to injure or offend. But however his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear by many folk, whose good opinion is well worth having; particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far as to imprint his likeness on their new-year cakes; and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo Medal,<sup>9</sup> or a Queen Anne's Farthing.<sup>1]</sup>

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold out-

7. Thus, in the *Sketch Book*, Irving perpetuated the fictitious Dutch historian, Knickerbocker, from his earlier *History of New York*. But in a footnote at the end of "Rip Van Winkle" he gave a clue to the German source of the folk tale by denying that Knickerbocker had based it on a "superstition about the Emperor Frederick der Rothbart." This led to the identification of a probable source, "Peter Klaus the Goatherd," in a collection of German legends that Irving had read (see H. A. Pochmann, "Irving's German Sources in *The Sketch Book*."

*Studies in Philology*, XXVII, July, 1930, 477-507).

8. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 2, ll. 231-232.

9. A silver medal presented by the British crown to all participants in the Battle of Waterloo (June 18, 1815) or in the engagements of the two previous days.

1. In the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) farthings (bronze coins worth a quarter of a penny) bearing her image were minted.



lines on the clear evening sky; but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant, (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weather-cocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina.<sup>2</sup> He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual, with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of

2. Referring to events treated in his *History of New York*. Stuyvesant was the autocratic governor of New Amster-

dam (1647-1664); he seized Fort Christina from the Swedes on the Delaware in 1655.

them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone-fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little old jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; every thing about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins,<sup>3</sup> which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and every thing he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence.

3. Knee breeches.

Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junta were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When any thing that was read or related dis-

pleased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across

the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry through the still evening air; "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar: one had a large head, broad face, and small piggish eyes: the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was

surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger,<sup>4</sup> high crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses<sup>5</sup> in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlor of Dominic Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands.<sup>6</sup> He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the wobegone party at nine-pins—the flagon—"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip—"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle!"

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled

4. A short, curved sword worn at the side.

5. Rosettes.

6. A Dutch gin long famous for excellence.

fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrustated with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysters of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grapevines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip,

involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—every thing was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—“That flagon last night,” thought he, “has addled my poor head sadly!”

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed—“My very dog,” sighed poor Rip, “has forgotten me!”

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, “the Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle.” Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap,<sup>7</sup> and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand

7. The “liberty cap,” familiar symbol of the French Revolution, was often displayed in the United States.



instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of congress—liberty—Bunker's Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon<sup>8</sup> to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "Whether he was Federal or Democrat?"<sup>9</sup> Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"—"Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the by-standers—"A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them."

8. Cf. Genesis xi: 1-9. The "confusion of tongues" occurred at Babel.

9. The earliest American political

parties—Federalist (Hamiltonian) and Democratic Republican (Jeffersonian).

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point<sup>1</sup>—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony's Nose.<sup>2</sup> I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—congress—Stony Point;—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three, "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The by-standers began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won't hurt you." The

1. A strategic headland on the Hudson below West Point, captured by *Mad Anthony Wayne*, July 18, 1779, in one of the most daring and brilliant exploits

of the Revolution.

2. Another fortified promontory on the Hudson, scene of a bloody contest in 1777.

name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:

"Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New-England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now!—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor—Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks: and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian<sup>3</sup> of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every

3. Adriaen Van der Donck (*ca.* 1620–1655), Dutch lawyer and founder of Yonkers, wrote a description of New Netherland, published in Dutch (Amsterdam, 1655).

twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name.\* That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to any thing else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of His Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related,

4. The town of Hudson handled a considerable shipping in Irving's youth. Henry (not Hendrick) Hudson, an English adventurer, discovered and explored

the river for the East Indian Company in 1609; abandoned on Hudson Bay by mutineers in 1611, he passed from history into legend.

and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood, but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

1819, 1860-1861

### To the Reader<sup>3</sup>

Worthy and Dear Reader!—Hast thou ever been waylaid in the midst of a pleasant tour by some treacherous malady: thy heels tripped up, and thou left to count the tedious minutes as they passed, in the solitude of an inn chamber? If thou hast, thou wilt be able to pity me. Behold me, interrupted in the course of my journeying up the fair banks of the Rhine, and laid up by indisposition in this old frontier town of Mentz. I have worn out every source of amusement. I know the sound of every clock that strikes, and bell that rings, in the place. I know to a second when to listen for the first tap of the Prussian drum, as it summons the garrison to parade, or at what hour to expect the distant sound of the Austrian military band. All these have grown wearisome to me; and even the well-known step of my doctor, as he slowly paces the corridor, with healing in the creak of his shoes, no longer affords an agreeable interruption to the monotony of my apartment.

For a time I attempted to beguile the weary hours, by studying German under the tuition of mine host's pretty little daughter, Katrina; but I soon found even German had not power to charm a languid ear, and that the conjugating of *ich liebe*<sup>4</sup> might be powerless, however rosy the lips which uttered it.

I tried to read, but my mind would not fix itself. I turned over volume after volume, but threw them by with distaste: "Well, then," said I at length, in despair, "if I cannot read a book, I will write one." Never was there a more lucky idea; it at once gave me occupation and amusement. The writing of a book was considered in old

3. *Tales of a Traveller* was published in London, in two volumes, August 25, 1824. In New York it appeared in four installments, August 24 to October 9, 1824. The first installment bore the subtitle "Strange Stories by a Nervous Gentleman." This contained the two pieces reprinted below: "To the

Reader," which became the introduction for the collected volume, and the "Adventure of the German Student." In this publication Irving still used the name Geoffrey Crayon, his whimsical pseudonym in the *Sketch Book*.

4. "I love."

times as an enterprise of toil and difficulty, insomuch that the most trifling lucubration was denominated a "work," and the world talked with awe and reverence of "the labors of the learned."—These matters are better understood nowadays.

Thanks to the improvements in all kind of manufactures, the art of book-making has been made familiar to the meanest capacity. Everybody is an author. The scribbling of a quarto is the mere pastime of the idle; the young gentleman throws off his brace of duodecimos in the intervals of the sporting season, and the young lady produces her set of volumes with the same facility that her great-grandmother worked a set of chair-bottoms.

The idea having struck me, therefore, to write a book, the reader will easily perceive that the execution of it was no difficult matter. I rummaged my portfolio, and cast about, in my recollection, for those floating materials which a man naturally collects in travelling; and here I have arranged them in this little work.

As I know this to be a story-telling and a story-reading age, and that the world is fond of being taught by apologue, I have digested the instruction I would convey into a number of tales. They may not possess the power of amusement, which the tales told by many of my contemporaries possess; but then I value myself on the sound moral which each of them contains. This may not be apparent at first, but the reader will be sure to find it out in the end. I am for curing the world by gentle alteratives, not by violent doses; indeed, the patient should never be conscious that he is taking a dose. I have learnt this much from experience under the hands of the worthy Hippocrates of Mentz.<sup>5</sup>

I am not, therefore, for those barefaced tales which carry their moral on the surface, staring one in the face; they are enough to deter the squeamish reader. On the contrary, I have often hid my moral from sight, and disguised it as much as possible by sweets and spices, so that while the simple reader is listening with open mouth to a ghost or a love story, he may have a bolus of sound morality popped down his throat, and be never the wiser for the fraud.<sup>6</sup>

As the public is apt to be curious about the sources whence an author draws his stories, doubtless that it may know how far to put faith in them, I would observe, that the *Adventure of the German Student*, or rather the latter part of it, is founded on an anecdote related to me as existing somewhere in French; and, indeed, I have

5. A whimsical pronunciation for the city named Mainz in German and Mayence in French. See the date line concluding the letter.

6. "Many years later \* \* \* a flattering review \* \* \* asserted: 'His most comical pieces have always a serious end in view.' 'You laugh,' said Irving to his

nephew, with [an] air of whimsical significance \* \* \*, 'but it is true. I have kept that to myself hitherto, but that man has found me out. He has detected the moral.'" [Quoted by Pochmann, *Washington Irving: Representative Selections*, p. 386].

been told, since writing it, that an ingenious tale has been founded on it by an English writer; but I have never met with either the former or the latter in print. Some of the circumstances in the *Adventure of the Mysterious Picture*, and in the *Story of the Young Italian*, are vague recollections of anecdotes related to me some years since; but from what source derived, I do not know. The *Adventure of the Young Painter among the banditti* is taken almost entirely from an authentic narrative in manuscript.

As to the other tales contained in this work, and indeed to my tales generally, I can make but one observation; I am an old traveller; I have read somewhat, heard and seen more, and dreamt more than all. My brain is filled, therefore, with all kinds of odds and ends. In travelling, these heterogeneous matters have become shaken up in my mind, as the articles are apt to be in an ill-packed travelling trunk; so that when I attempt to draw forth a fact, I cannot determine whether I have read, heard, or dreamt it; and I am always at a loss to know how much to believe of my own stories.

These matters being premised, fall to, worthy reader, with good appetite; and, above all, with good humor, to what is here set before thee. If the tales I have furnished should prove to be bad, they will at least be found short; so that no one will be wearied long on the same theme. "Variety is charming," as some poet observes.

There is a certain relief in change, even though it be from bad to worse! As I have often found in travelling in a stage-coach, that it is often a comfort to shift one's position, and be bruised in a new place.

Ever thine,

Geoffrey Crayon.

*Dated from the* HOTEL DE DARMSTADT,  
*ci-devant* HOTEL DE PARIS,  
MENTZ, *otherwise called* MAYENCE.

## Adventure of the German Student<sup>7</sup>

On a stormy night, in the tempestuous times of the French revolution, a young German was returning to his lodgings, at a late hour, across the old part of Paris. The lightning gleamed, and the loud claps of thunder rattled through the lofty narrow streets—but I

7. The Gothic story, employing physical and psychological terror in a weird or mysterious setting, had enjoyed a vogue toward the end of the previous century, especially in German literature and among British writers from Walpole to Ann Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis. An earlier American author, Charles Brockden Brown, had succeeded

notably in this vein. Irving gave a humorously perverse twist to the Gothic tale; the present story, which appeared in *Tales of a Traveller*, is an excellent example of his success. This literary impulse later reached its American perfection in the psychological subtleties of Poe.

should first tell you something about this young German.

Gottfried Wolfgang was a young man of good family. He had studied for some time at Gottingen, but being of a visionary and enthusiastic character, he had wandered into those wild and speculative doctrines which have so often bewildered German students. His secluded life, his intense application, and the singular nature of his studies, had an effect on both mind and body. His health was impaired; his imagination diseased. He had been indulging in fanciful speculations on spiritual essences, until, like Swedenborg, he had an ideal world of his own around him. He took up a notion, I do not know from what cause, that there was an evil influence hanging over him; an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and ensure his perdition. Such an idea working on his melancholy temperament, produced the most gloomy effects. He became haggard and desponding. His friends discovered the mental malady preying upon him, and determined that the best cure was a change of scene; he was sent, therefore, to finish his studies amidst the splendors and gayeties of Paris.

Wolfgang arrived at Paris at the breaking out of the revolution.<sup>8</sup> The popular delirium at first caught his enthusiastic mind, and he was captivated by the political and philosophical theories of the day: but the scenes of blood which followed shocked his sensitive nature, disgusted him with society and the world, and made him more than ever a recluse. He shut himself up in a solitary apartment in the *Pays Latin*,<sup>9</sup> the quarter of students. There, in a gloomy street not far from the monastic walls of the Sorbonne, he pursued his favorite speculations. Sometimes he spent hours together in the great libraries of Paris, those catacombs of departed authors, rummaging among their hoards of dusty and obsolete works in quest of food for his unhealthy appetite. He was, in a manner, a literary ghoul, feeding in the charnel-house of decayed literature.

Wolfgang, though solitary and recluse, was of an ardent temperament, but for a time it operated merely upon his imagination. He was too shy and ignorant of the world to make any advances to the fair, but he was a passionate admirer of female beauty, and in his lonely chamber would often lose himself in reveries on forms and faces which he had seen, and his fancy would deck out images of loveliness far surpassing the reality.

While his mind was in this excited and sublimated state, a dream produced an extraordinary effect upon him. It was of a female face of transcendent beauty. So strong was the impression made, that he dreamt of it again and again. It haunted his thoughts by day, his

8. The French Revolution is generally dated from 1789; the Republic was declared in 1792.

9. The Latin Quarter, adjacent to the

University (cf. Sorbonne, below), occupied by students, artists, and Bohemians.



slumbers by night; in fine, he became passionately enamoured of this shadow of a dream. This lasted so long that it became one of those fixed ideas which haunt the minds of melancholy men, and are at times mistaken for madness.

Such was Gottfried Wolfgang, and such his situation at the time I mentioned. He was returning home late one stormy night, through some of the old and gloomy streets of the *Marais*, the ancient part of Paris. The loud claps of thunder rattled among the high houses of the narrow streets. He came to the *Place de Grève*, the square where public executions are performed. The lightning quivered about the pinnacles of the ancient *Hôtel de Ville*,<sup>1</sup> and shed flickering gleams over the open space in front. As Wolfgang was crossing the square, he shrank back with horror at finding himself close by the guillotine. It was the height of the reign of terror, when this dreadful instrument of death stood ever ready, and its scaffold was continually running with the blood of the virtuous and the brave. It had that very day been actively employed in the work of carnage, and there it stood in grim array, amidst a silent and sleeping city, waiting for fresh victims.

Wolfgang's heart sickened within him, and he was turning shuddering from the horrible engine, when he beheld a shadowy form, cowering as it were at the foot of the steps which led up to the scaffold. A succession of vivid flashes of lightning revealed it more distinctly. It was a female figure, dressed in black. She was seated on one of the lower steps of the scaffold, leaning forward, her face hid in her lap; and her long dishevelled tresses hanging to the ground, streaming with the rain which fell in torrents. Wolfgang paused. There was something awful in this solitary monument of woe. The female had the appearance of being above the common order. He knew the times to be full of vicissitude, and that many a fair head, which had once been pillowed on down, now wandered houseless. Perhaps this was some poor mourner whom the dreadful axe had rendered desolate, and who sat here heart-broken on the strand of existence, from which all that was dear to her had been launched into eternity.

He approached, and addressed her in the accents of sympathy. She raised her head and gazed wildly at him. What was his astonishment at beholding, by the bright glare of the lightning, the very face which had haunted him in his dreams. It was pale and disconsolate, but ravishingly beautiful.

Trembling with violent and conflicting emotions, Wolfgang again accosted her. He spoke something of her being exposed at such an hour of the night, and to the fury of such a storm, and offered to conduct her to her friends. She pointed to the guillotine with a ges-

1. City hall.

ture of dreadful signification.

"I have no friend on earth!" said she.

"But you have a home," said Wolfgang.

"Yes—in the grave!"

The heart of the student melted at the words.

"If a stranger dare make an offer," said he, "without danger of being misunderstood, I would offer my humble dwelling as a shelter; myself as a devoted friend. I am friendless myself in Paris, and a stranger in the land; but if my life could be of service, it is at your disposal, and should be sacrificed before harm or indignity should come to you."

There was an honest earnestness in the young man's manner that had its effect. His foreign accent, too, was in his favor; it showed him not to be a hackneyed inhabitant of Paris. Indeed, there is an eloquence in true enthusiasm that is not to be doubted. The homeless stranger confided herself implicitly to the protection of the student.

He supported her faltering steps across the *Pont Neuf*, and by the place where the statue of Henry the Fourth had been overthrown by the populace. The storm had abated, and the thunder rumbled at a distance. All Paris was quiet; that great volcano of human passion slumbered for a while, to gather fresh strength for the next day's eruption. The student conducted his charge through the ancient streets of the *Pays Latin*, and by the dusky walls of the Sorbonne, to the great dingy hotel which he inhabited. The old portress who admitted them stared with surprise at the unusual sight of the melancholy Wolfgang with a female companion.

On entering his apartment, the student, for the first time, blushed at the scantiness and indifference of his dwelling. He had but one chamber—an old-fashioned saloon—heavily carved, and fantastically furnished with the remains of former magnificence, for it was one of those hotels in the quarter of the Luxembourg palace, which had once belonged to nobility. It was lumbered with books and papers, and all the usual apparatus of a student, and his bed stood in a recess at one end.

When lights were brought, and Wolfgang had a better opportunity of contemplating the stranger, he was more than ever intoxicated by her beauty. Her face was pale, but of a dazzling fairness, set off by a profusion of raven hair that hung clustering about it. Her eyes were large and brilliant, with a singular expression approaching almost to wildness. As far as her black dress permitted her shape to be seen, it was of perfect symmetry. Her whole appearance was highly striking, though she was dressed in the simplest style. The only thing approaching to an ornament which she wore, was a broad black band round her neck, clasped by diamonds.

The perplexity now commenced with the student how to dispose

of the helpless being thus thrown upon his protection. He thought of abandoning his chamber to her, and seeking shelter for himself elsewhere. Still he was so fascinated by her charms, there seemed to be such a spell upon his thoughts and senses, that he could not tear himself from her presence. Her manner, too, was singular and unaccountable. She spoke no more of the guillotine. Her grief had abated. The attentions of the student had first won her confidence, and then, apparently, her heart. She was evidently an enthusiast like himself, and enthusiasts soon understood each other.

In the infatuation of the moment, Wolfgang avowed his passion for her. He told her the story of his mysterious dream, and how she had possessed his heart before he had even seen her. She was strangely affected by his recital, and acknowledged to have felt an impulse towards him equally unaccountable. It was the time for wild theory and wild actions. Old prejudices and superstitions were done away; every thing was under the sway of the "Goddess of Reason."<sup>2</sup> Among other rubbish of the old times, the forms and ceremonies of marriage began to be considered superfluous bonds for honorable minds. Social compacts were the vogue. Wolfgang was too much of a theorist not to be tainted by the liberal doctrines of the day.

"Why should we separate?" said he: "our hearts are united; in the eye of reason and honor we are as one. What need is there of sordid forms to bind high souls together?"

The stranger listened with emotion: she had evidently received illumination at the same school.

"You have no home nor family," continued he; "let me be every thing to you, or rather let us be every thing to one another. If form is necessary, form shall be observed—there is my hand. I pledge myself to you for ever."

"For ever?" said the stranger, solemnly.

"For ever!" repeated Wolfgang.

The stranger clasped the hand extended to her: "then I am yours," murmured she, and sank upon his bosom.

The next morning the student left his bride sleeping, and sallied forth at an early hour to seek more spacious apartments suitable to the change in his situation. When he returned, he found the stranger lying with her head hanging over the bed, and one arm thrown over it. He spoke to her, but received no reply. He advanced to awaken her from her uneasy posture. On taking her hand, it was cold—there was no pulsation—her face was pallid and ghastly.—In a word she was a corpse.

Horried and frantic, he alarmed the house. A scene of confusion

2. The "Goddess of Reason" had been literally enthroned, in recognition of the rationalistic program of the Revolution

concerning government and social institutions, including marriage.

ensued. The police was summoned. As the officer of police entered the room, he started back on beholding the corpse.

"Good heaven!" cried he, "how did this woman come here?"

"Do you know anything about her?" said Wolfgang, eagerly.

"Do I?" exclaimed the officer: "she was guillotined yesterday."

He stepped forward; undid the black collar round the neck of the corpse, and the head rolled on the floor!

The student burst into a frenzy. "The fiend! the fiend has gained possession of me!" shrieked he: "I am lost for ever."

They tried to soothe him, but in vain. He was possessed with the frightful belief that an evil spirit had reanimated the dead body to ensnare him. He went distracted, and died in a mad-house.

Here the old gentleman with the haunted head finished his narrative.

"And is this really a fact?" said the inquisitive gentleman.

"A fact not to be doubted," replied the other. "I had it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a mad-house in Paris."

1824, 1860-61

## JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

(1789-1851)

Cooper was born at Burlington, New Jersey, September 15, 1789. The next year his father settled on the family estate, now Cooperstown, at the foot of Otsego Lake, in New York. There the family was dominant; Judge Cooper was by nature the landed proprietor. Young Cooper was privately tutored; then he attended Yale about three years, without achieving a degree. After a year at sea before the mast, he was commissioned a midshipman in the United States Navy in 1808. Three years later he married Susan Augusta DeLancey, daughter of a wealthy family in Mamaroneck, Westchester County, New York; he then resigned his commission and became the country gentle-

man, devoting himself to his family, and to agricultural, political, financial, and social interests in Cooperstown and in Westchester County.

According to a charming legend, Cooper's first novel (*Precaution*, 1820) was a response to his wife's challenge to improve on the current British society fiction, and the failure of this work turned him to historical novels. *The Spy* (1821), a novel of the Revolution, foreshadowed his typical hero in Harvey Birch, and launched his career as the American rival of Sir Walter Scott in the popular field of historical romance. In the remaining thirty years of his life, he poured out a staggering total of thirty-three novels, numerous

volumes of social comment, a *History of the Navy*, and five volumes of travels.

In the *Leather-Stocking Tales* the American frontier hero first materialized, to run his limitless course to the present day, through the romance, dime novel, drama, movies, and television. Fearless and miraculously resourceful, he survives the rigors of nature and the villainy of man by superior strength and skill, and by the help of heaven, for he is always quaintly moral. In short, he is the knight of the Christian romances transplanted to the soil of democracy and the American forest and frontier. Cooper's Natty Bumppo appears in the five novels under various names which, like a knight of old, he has gained by his exploits. Deerslayer merges into Hawk-eye, Pathfinder, and Leather-Stocking.

Cooper did not plan these novels as a series, nor did he publish them in the chronological order of the events in their hero's life. In *The Pioneers* (1823), the author's third novel, Natty Bumppo first appeared, as a seasoned scout in advancing years, accompanied by the dying Chingachgook, the old Indian chief who has been his faithful comrade in adventure. The *Leather-Stocking Tales* are named below in the order of events in the life of Natty Bumppo: *The Deerslayer* (1841), early adventures with the hostile Hurons, on Lake Otsego, New York, in 1740-1745; *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), an adventure of the French and Indian Wars, in the Lake George country in 1757;

*The Pathfinder* (1840), continuing the same border warfare in 1760, in the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario country; *The Pioneers* (1823), described above, taking place in 1793, as the eastern forest frontier begins to disappear, and old Chingachgook dies; and *The Prairie* (1827), set in the new frontier of the western plains in 1804, where the aged Leather-Stocking, having assisted some white pioneers and the Pawnees against the Sioux, takes leave of life amid people who can still value his devotion to a dying chivalry.

Almost as popular in their own day as the *Leather-Stocking Tales* were Cooper's romances of seafaring and naval combat; of these *The Pilot* (1823) set the pattern and provided the typical heroes in Long Tom Coffin and the mysterious "Pilot," generally taken to represent the gallant John Paul Jones. Later novels of the sea included, notably, *The Red Rover* (1828), *The Water-Witch* (1830), *The Two Admirals* (1842), and *The Wing-and-Wing* (1842).

Cooper's earnestness as a social critic was strongly evident in his novels based on European history. *The Bravo* (1831), *The Heidenmauer* (1832), and *The Headsman* (1833), are satires of European feudalism, but follow the conventional pattern which Scott had established for historical romance. From 1826 to 1833 Cooper lived observantly abroad, ostensibly as American consul at Lyon, but actually as a persistent traveler. His novels of foreign locale, as well as his travel books and volumes of social comment, reflect his con-

tinuous awareness of contrasts in society, behavior, and government between the United States and Europe, particularly Great Britain. Abroad he was regarded as a champion of American life; but at home, his comments ironically gained him a reputation as a defender of the aristocracy. His *Sketches of Switzerland and Gleanings in Europe*, published in five volumes between 1836 and 1838, are now regarded as genuine contributions to our literature of travel, but at the time they antagonized equalitarian democrats, and the breach was widened by such commentaries and novels as *A Letter to His Countrymen* (1834), and *Homeward Bound, Home as Found*, and *The American Democrat*, all published in 1838.

Among the best contributions of his prolific later years is a trilogy of novels, *Satanstoe* (1845), *The Chainbearer* (1845), and *The Redskins* (1846), in which the author employs the fiction of certain "Littlepage Manuscripts," purported to contain records of three generations of a great family of upstate New York landholders. The novels form a consecutive social history of three generations of Dutch patroon society in the Hudson valley, ending with the Anti-Rent Wars of the 1840's, when

the tenants successfully opposed the feudal leases and perpetual sovereignty of the lords of the manor. Thus was founded the family novel of several volumes. Uneven in quality, the *Littlepage Manuscripts* succeeded by their fine sense of history and their narrative intensity, and they are the last of Cooper's works to do so. Cooper died in 1851 on the day before his sixty-second birthday.

Cooper's novels, especially the *Leather-Stocking Tales*, have been reprinted many times but never critically edited; thus the authoritative *Descriptive Bibliography of the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, by Robert E. Spiller and P. C. Blackburn, 1934, is indispensable for serious study. The Author's Revised Edition appeared in 12 vols. in 1851, followed by an edition illustrated by F. O. C. Darley, 32 vols., 1859-1861. The Household Edition, 32 vols., 1876-1884, contains valuable introductory essays by Susan Fenimore Cooper, the novelist's daughter. *The Works*, 33 vols., 1895-1900, is still procurable. See also *Gleanings in Europe*, 2 vols., edited by Robert E. Spiller, 1928-1930, and *The American Democrat*, edited by H. L. Mencken, 1931. An excellent collection of the nonfiction is *Cooper: Representative Selections*, edited by Robert E. Spiller, American Writers Series, 1936.

There is no definitive biography; but *Fenimore Cooper, Critic of His Times*, by Robert E. Spiller, 1931, is an authoritative and penetrating study, and may be supplemented by the same author's Introduction to the *Representative Selections* (listed above). The comments by Susan Fenimore Cooper in *The Cooper Gallery*, 1865, and T. R. Lounsbury's biography, 1882, are useful. A recent biography is by James Grossman, 1949. *The Correspondence* has been compiled by J. F. Cooper, 2 vols., 1922, and by James F. Beard, *The Letters and Journals* \* \* \*, 2 vols., 1960.

## From The American Democrat

### *An Aristocrat and a Democrat*

We live in an age when the words aristocrat and democrat are much used, without regard to the real significations. An aristocrat is

one of a few who possess the political power of a country; a democrat, one of the many. The words are also properly applied to those who entertain notions favorable to aristocratical or democratical forms of government. Such persons are not necessarily either aristocrats or democrats in fact, but merely so in opinion. Thus a member of a democratical government may have an aristocratical bias, and vice versa.

To call a man who has the habits and opinions of a gentleman, an aristocrat from that fact alone, is an abuse of terms and betrays ignorance of the true principles of government, as well as of the world. It must be an equivocal freedom under which every one is not the master of his own innocent acts and associations; and he is a sneaking democrat indeed who will submit to be dictated to, in those habits over which neither law nor morality assumes a right of control.

Some men fancy that a democrat can only be one who seeks the level, social, mental and moral, of the majority, a rule that would at once exclude all men of refinement, education, and taste from the class. These persons are enemies of democracy, as they at once render it impracticable. They are usually great sticklers for their own associations and habits, too, though unable to comprehend any of a nature that are superior. They are, in truth, aristocrats in principle, though assuming a contrary pretension, the groundwork of all their feelings and arguments being self. Such is not the intention of liberty, whose aim is to leave every man to be the master of his own acts; denying hereditary honors, it is true, as unjust and unnecessary, but not denying the inevitable consequences of civilization.

The law of God is the only rule of conduct in this, as in other matters. Each man should do as he would be done by. Were the question put to the greatest advocate of indiscriminate association, whether he would submit to have his company and habits dictated to him, he would be one of the first to resist the tyranny; for they who are the most rigid in maintaining their own claims in such matters, are usually the loudest in decrying those whom they fancy to be better off than themselves. Indeed, it may be taken as a rule in social intercourse, that he who is the most apt to question the pretensions of others is the most conscious of the doubtful position he himself occupies; thus establishing the very claims he affects to deny, by letting his jealousy of it be seen. Manners, education, and refinement, are positive things, and they bring with them innocent tastes which are productive of high enjoyments; and it is as unjust to deny their possessors their indulgence as it would be to insist on the less fortunate's passing the time they would rather devote to athletic amusements, in listening to operas for which they have no relish, sung in a language they do not understand.

All that democracy means, is as equal a participation in rights as is practicable; and to pretend that social equality is a condition of

popular institutions is to assume that the latter are destructive of civilization, for, as nothing is more self-evident than the impossibility of raising all men to the highest standard of tastes and refinement, the alternative would be to reduce the entire community to the lowest. The whole embarrassment on this point exists in the difficulty of making men comprehend qualities they do not themselves possess. We can all perceive the difference between ourselves and our inferiors, but when it comes to a question of the difference between us and our superiors, we fail to appreciate merits of which we have no proper conceptions. In face of this obvious difficulty, there is the safe and just governing rule, already mentioned, or that of permitting every one to be the undisturbed judge of his own habits and associations, so long as they are innocent and do not impair the rights of others to be equally judges for themselves. It follows, that social intercourse must regulate itself, independently of institutions, with the exception that the latter, while they withhold no natural, bestow no factitious advantages beyond those which are inseparable from the rights of property, and general civilization.

In a democracy, men are just as free to aim at the highest attainable places in society, as to attain the largest fortunes; and it would be clearly unworthy of all noble sentiment to say that the grovelling competition for money shall alone be free, while that which enlists all the liberal acquirements and elevated sentiments of the race, is denied the democrat. Such an avowal would be at once a declaration of the inferiority of the system, since nothing but ignorance and vulgarity could be its fruits.

The democratic gentleman must differ in many essential particulars from the aristocratical gentleman, though in their ordinary habits and tastes they are virtually identical. Their principles vary; and, to a slight degree, their deportment accordingly. The democrat, recognizing the right of all to participate in power, will be more liberal in his general sentiments, a quality of superiority in itself; but in conceding this much to his fellow man, he will proudly maintain his own independence of vulgar domination as indispensable to his personal habits. The same principles and manliness that would induce him to depose a royal despot would induce him to resist a vulgar tyrant.

There is no more capital, though more common error, than to suppose him an aristocrat who maintains his independence of habits; for democracy asserts the control of the majority, only in matters of law, and not in matters of custom. The very object of the institution is the utmost practicable personal liberty, and to affirm the contrary would be sacrificing the end to the means.

An aristocrat, therefore, is merely one who fortifies his exclusive privileges by positive institutions, and a democrat, one who is willing



to admit of a free competition in all things. To say, however, that the last supposes this competition will lead to nothing is an assumption that means are employed without any reference to an end. He is the purest democrat who best maintains his rights, and no rights can be dearer to a man of cultivation than exemptions from unseasonable invasions on his time by the coarse minded and ignorant.

1838

## From The Deerslayer, Chapter XXVII<sup>1</sup>

### [The Young Deerslayer]

It was an imposing scene into which Deerslayer now found himself advancing. All the older warriors were seated on the trunk of the fallen tree, waiting his approach with grave decorum. On the right stood the young men, armed, while the left was occupied by the women and children. In the center was an open space of considerable extent, always canopied by leaves, but from which the underbrush, dead wood, and other obstacles had been carefully removed. The more open area had probably been much used by former parties, for this was the place where the appearance of a sward was the most decided. The arches of the woods, even at high noon, cast their somber shadows on the spot, which the brilliant rays of the sun that struggled through the leaves contributed to mellow, and, if such an expression can be used, to illuminate. It was probably from a similar scene that the mind of man first got its idea of the effects of Gothic tracery and churchly hues; this temple of nature producing some such effect, so far as light and shadows were concerned, as the well-known offspring of human invention.

As was not unusual among the tribes and wandering bands of the aborigines, two chiefs shared, in nearly equal degrees, the principal and primitive authority that was wielded over these children of the forest. \* \* \* One was a senior, well known for eloquence in debate, wisdom in council, and prudence in measures; while his great

1. This episode and the two which follow have been drawn from three different novels of the series of *Leather-Stocking Tales*. They present three characteristic pictures of the frontier hero Natty Bumppo: in his youth (*The Deerslayer*); in the period of his greatest exploits and usefulness (*The Last of the Mohicans*); and as the patriarch, dying along with an American legend and a way of life (*The Prairie*). The chapters have been printed in the chronological order of Natty's life.

In *The Deerslayer* young Natty is involved in the French and Indian Wars

against the hostile Huron Indians (allies of the French) near Lake Otsego, New York. Earlier in the novel, he had been trained as a hunter by the friendly Delawares and had won the name of Deerslayer. Now, however, the Hurons have captured him. They have released him to accomplish a mission for them, but he is on his word of honor to return at an appointed hour. The mission has been unsuccessful; Chapter XXVII opens with Deerslayer's voluntary return to captivity—and probable death—in fulfillment of his pledge.

competitor, if not his rival, was a brave, distinguished in war, notorious for ferocity, and remarkable, in the way of intellect, for nothing but the cunning and expedients of the warpath. The first was Rivenoak, who has already been introduced to the reader, while the last was called le Panthère, in the language of the Canadas; or the Panther, to resort to the vernacular of the English colonies. The appellation of the fighting chief was supposed to indicate the qualities of the warrior, agreeably to a practice of the red-man's nomenclature; ferocity, cunning, and treachery being, perhaps, the distinctive features of his character. The title had been received from the French, and was prized so much the more from that circumstance, the Indian submitting profoundly to the greater intelligence of his pale-face allies in most things of this nature. How well the *sobriquet* was merited, will be seen in the sequel.

Rivenoak and the Panther sat side by side, awaiting the approach of their prisoner, as Deerslayer put his moccasined foot on the strand; nor did either move, or utter a syllable, until the young man had advanced into the center of the area, and proclaimed his presence with his voice. This was done firmly, though in the simple manner that marked the character of the individual.

"Here I am, Mingos,"<sup>2</sup> he said, in the dialect of the Delawares, a language that most present understood; "here I am, and there is the sun. One is not more true to the laws of natur', than the other has proved true to his word. I am your prisoner; do with me what you please. My business with man and 'arth is settled; nothing remains now but to meet the white man's God, accordin' to a white man's duties and gifts."

A murmur of approbation escaped even the women at this address, and, for an instant there was a strong and pretty general desire to adopt into the tribe one who owned so brave a spirit. Still there were dissenters from this wish, among the principal of whom might be classed the Panther, and his sister, le Sumach, so called from the number of her children, who was the widow of le Loup Cervier,<sup>3</sup> now known to have fallen by the hand of the captive. Native ferocity held one in subjection, while the corroding passion of revenge prevented the other from admitting any gentler feeling at the moment. Not so with Rivenoak. This chief arose, stretched his arm before him in a gesture of courtesy, and paid his compliments with an ease and dignity that a prince might have envied. As, in that band, his wisdom and eloquence were confessedly without rivals, he knew that on himself would properly fall the duty of first replying to the speech of the pale-face.

"Pale-face, you are honest," said the Huron orator. "My people are happy in having captured a man, and not a skulking fox. We

2. Familiar name for the Hurons.

3. French for "lynx."

now know you; we shall treat you like a brave. If you have slain one of our warriors, and helped to kill others, you have a life of your own ready to give away in return. Some of my young men thought that the blood of a pale-face was too thin; that it would refuse to run under the Huron knife. You will show them it is not so; your heart is stout as well as your body. It is a pleasure to make such a prisoner; should my warriors say that the death of le Loup Cervier ought not to be forgotten, and that he cannot travel towards the land of spirits alone, that his enemy must be sent to overtake him, they will remember that he fell by the hand of a brave, and send you after him with such signs of our friendship as shall not make him ashamed to keep your company. I have spoken; you know what I have said."

"True enough, Mingo, all true as the gospel," returned the simple-minded hunter; "you *have* spoken, and I *do* know not only what you have *said*, but, what is still more important, what you *mean*. I dare to say your warrior the Lynx, was a stouthearted brave, and worthy of your friendship and respect, but I do not feel unworthy to keep his company without any passport from your hands. Nevertheless, here I am, ready to receive judgment from your council, if, indeed, the matter was not determined among you afore I got back."

"My old men would not sit in council over a pale-face until they saw him among them," answered Rivenoak, looking around him a little ironically; "they said it would be like sitting in council over the winds; they go where they will, and come back as they see fit, and not otherwise. There was one voice that spoke in your favor, Deerslayer, but it was alone, like the song of the wren whose mate has been struck by the hawk."

"I thank that voice, whos'ever it may have been, Mingo, and will say it was as true a voice as the rest were lying voices. A furlough is as binding on a pale-face, if he be honest, as it is on a red-skin; and was it not so, I would never bring disgrace on the Delawares, among whom I may be said to have received my education. But words are useless and lead to braggin' feelin's; here I am; act your will on me."

Rivenoak made a sign of acquiescence, and then a short conference was privately held among the chiefs. As soon as the latter ended, three or four young men fell back from among the armed group, and disappeared. Then it was signified to the prisoner that he was at liberty to go at large on the point, until a council was held concerning his fate. \* \* \*

In the meantime the business of the camp appeared to proceed in its regular train. The chiefs consulted apart, admitting no one but the Sumach to their councils; for she, the widow of the fallen warrior, had an exclusive right to be heard on such an occasion. The

young men strolled about in indolent listlessness, awaiting the result with Indian patience, while the females prepared the feast that was to celebrate the termination of the affair, whether it proved fortunate, or otherwise, for our hero. No one betrayed feeling; and an indifferent observer, beyond the extreme watchfulness of the sentinels, would have detected no extraordinary movement or sensation to denote the real state of things. Two or three old women put their heads together, and, it appeared, unfavorably to the prospect of Deerslayer, by their scowling looks and angry gesture; but a group of Indian girls were evidently animated by a different impulse, as was apparent by stolen glances that expressed pity and regret. In this condition of the camp, an hour soon glided away.

Suspense is, perhaps, the feeling, of all others, that is most difficult to be supported. When Deerslayer landed, he fully, in the course of a few minutes, expected to undergo the tortures of an Indian revenge, and he was prepared to meet his fate manfully; but the delay proved far more trying than the nearer approach of suffering, and the intended victim began seriously to meditate some desperate effort at escape, as it might be from sheer anxiety to terminate the scene, when he was suddenly summoned to appear, once more, in front of his judges, who had already arranged the band in its former order, in readiness to receive him.

"Killer of the Deer," commenced Rivenoak, as soon as his captive stood before him, "my aged men have listened to wise words; they are ready to speak. You are a man whose fathers came from beyond the rising sun; we are children of the setting sun; we turn our faces towards the Great Sweet Lakes, when we look towards our villages. It may be a wise country and full of riches, towards the morning; but it is very pleasant towards the evening. We love most to look in that direction. When we gaze at the east, we feel afraid, canoe after canoe bringing more and more of your people in the track of the sun, as if their land was so full as to run over. The red-men are few already; they have need of help. One of our best lodges has lately been emptied by the death of its master; it will be a long time before his son can grow big enough to sit in his place. There is his widow; she will want venison to feed her and her children, for her sons are yet like the young of the robin before they quit the nest. By your hand has this great calamity befallen her. She has two duties; one to le Loup Cervier, and one to his children. Scalp for scalp, life for life, blood for blood, is one law; to feed her young, another. We know you, Killer of the Deer. You are honest; when you say a thing, it is so. You have but one tongue, and that is not forked, like a snake's. Your head is never hid in the grass; all can see it. What you say, that will you do. You are just. When you have

done wrong, it is your wish to do right again, as soon as you can. Here is the Sumach; she is alone in her wigwam, with children crying around her for food; yonder is a rifle; it is loaded and ready to be fired. Take the gun; go forth and shoot a deer; bring the venison and lay it before the widow of le Loup Cervier; feed her children; call yourself her husband. After which, your heart will no longer be Delaware, but Huron; le Sumach's ears will not hear the cries of her children; my people will count the proper number of warriors."

"I feared this, Rivenoak," answered Deerslayer, when the other had ceased speaking; "yes, I did dread that it would come to this. Hows'ever, the truth is soon told, and that will put an end to all expectations on this head. Mingo, I'm white, and Christian-born; 'twould ill become me to take a wife, under red-skin forms, from among heathen. That which I wouldn't do in peaceable times, and under a bright sun, still less would I do behind clouds, in order to save my life. I may never marry; most likely Providence, in putting me up here in the woods, has intended I should live single, and without a lodge of my own; but should such a thing come to pass, none but a woman of my own color and gifts shall darken the door of my wigwam. As for feeding the young of your dead warrior, I would do that cheerfully, could it be done without discredit; but it cannot, seeing that I can never live in a Huron village. Your own young men must find the Sumach in venison, and the next time she marries, let her take a husband whose legs are not long enough to overrun territory that don't belong to him. We fou't a fair battle, and he fell; in this there is nothin' but what a brave expects, and should be ready to meet. As for getting a Mingo heart, as well might you expect to see grey hairs on a boy, or the blackberry growing on the pine. No, no, Huron; my gifts are white, so far as wives are concerned; it is Delaware in all things touchin' Indians."

These words were scarcely out of the mouth of Deerslayer, before a common murmur betrayed the dissatisfaction with which they had been heard. The aged women, in particular, were loud in their expressions of disgust; and the gentle Sumach herself, a woman quite old enough to be our hero's mother, was not the least pacific in her denunciations. But all the other manifestations of disappointment and discontent were thrown into the background by the fierce resentment of the Panther. This grim chief had thought it a degradation to permit his sister to become the wife of a pale-face of the Yengeese<sup>4</sup> at all. \* \* \* The animal from which he got his name does not glare on his intended prey with more frightful ferocity than his eyes gleamed on the captive; nor was his arm backward in

4. Indian pronunciation of "English"; supposed source of "Yankee."

seconding the fierce resentment that almost consumed his breast.

"Dog of the pale-faces!" he exclaimed, in Iroquois, "go yell among the curs of your own evil hunting-grounds!"

The denunciation was accompanied by an appropriate action. Even while speaking, his arm was lifted, and the tomahawk hurled. Luckily the loud tones of the speaker had drawn the eye of Deerslayer towards him, else would that moment have probably closed his career. So great was the dexterity with which this dangerous weapon was thrown, and so deadly the intent, that it would have riven the skull of the prisoner, had he not stretched forth an arm, and caught the handle in one of its turns, with a readiness quite as remarkable as the skill with which the missile had been hurled. The projectile force was so great, notwithstanding, that when Deerslayer's arm was arrested, his hand was raised above and behind his own head, and in the very attitude necessary to return the attack. It is not certain whether the circumstance of finding himself unexpectedly in this menacing posture and armed, tempted the young man to retaliate, or whether sudden resentment overcame his forbearance and prudence. His eye kindled, however, and a small red spot appeared on each cheek, while he cast all his energy in the effort of his arm, and threw back the weapon at his assailant. The unexpectedness of this blow contributed to its success, the Panther neither raising an arm nor bending his head to avoid it. The keen little axe struck the victim in a perpendicular line with the nose, directly between the eyes, literally braining him on the spot. Sallying forward, as the serpent darts at his enemy even while receiving its own death-wound, this man of powerful frame fell his length into the open area formed by the circle, quivering in death. A common rush to his relief left the captive, for a single instant, quite without the crowd; and, willing to make one desperate effort for life he bounded off with the activity of a deer. There was but a breathless instant, when the whole band, old and young, women and children, abandoning the lifeless body of the Panther where it lay, raised the yell of alarm, and followed in pursuit.

Sudden as had been the event which induced Deerslayer to make this desperate trial of speed, his mind was not wholly unprepared for the fearful emergency. In the course of the past hour, he had pondered well on the chances of such an experiment, and had shrewdly calculated all the details of success and failure. At the first leap, therefore, his body was completely under the direction of an intelligence that turned all its efforts to the best account, and prevented everything like hesitation or indecision, at the important instant of the start. To this alone was he indebted for the first great advantage, that of getting through the line of sentinels un-

harmed. \* \* \*

Several rifles were discharged at Deerslayer \* \* \* as he came out into the comparative exposure of the clear forest. But the direction of his line of flight, which partially crossed that of the fire, the haste with which the weapons had been aimed, and the general confusion that prevailed in the camp, prevented any harm from being done. Bullets whistled past him, and many cut twigs from the branches at his side, but not one touched even his dress. The delay caused by these fruitless attempts was of great service to the fugitive, who had gained more than a hundred yards on even the leading men of the Hurons, ere something like concert and order had entered into the chase. To think of following with rifle in hand was out of the question; and after emptying their pieces in vague hopes of wounding their captive, the best runners of the Indians threw them aside, calling out to the women and boys to recover and load them again as soon as possible.

Deerslayer knew too well the desperate nature of the struggle in which he was engaged, to lose one of the precious moments. He also knew that his only hope was to run in a straight line, for as soon as he began to turn, or double, the greater number of his pursuers would put escape out of the question. He held his way, therefore, in a diagonal direction up the acclivity, which was neither very high nor very steep in this part of the mountain, but which was sufficiently toilsome for one contending for life, to render it painfully oppressive. There, however, he slackened his speed to recover breath, proceeding even at a quick walk or a slow trot, along the more difficult parts of the way. The Hurons were whooping and leaping behind him; but this he disregarded, well knowing they must overcome the difficulties he had surmounted ere they could reach the elevation to which he had attained. The summit of the first hill was now quite near him, and he saw, by the formation of the land, that a deep glen intervened, before the base of a second hill could be reached. Walking deliberately to the summit, he glanced eagerly about him in every direction, in quest of a cover. None offered in the ground; but a fallen tree lay near him, and desperate circumstances require desperate remedies. This tree lay in a line parallel to the glen, at the brow of the hill; to leap on it, and then to force his person as close as possible under its lower side, took but a moment. Previously to disappearing from his pursuers, however, Deerslayer stood on the height and gave a cry of triumph, as if exulting at the sight of the descent that lay before him.—In the next instant he was stretched beneath the tree.

No sooner was this expedient adopted, than the young man ascertained how desperate had been his own efforts, by the violence

of the pulsations in his frame. He could hear his heart beat, and his breathing was like the action of a bellows in quick motion. Breath was gained, however, and the heart soon ceased to throb as if about to break through its confinement. The footsteps of those who toiled up the opposite side of the acclivity were now audible, and presently voices and treads announced the arrival of the pursuers. The foremost shouted as they reached the height; then, fearful that their enemy would escape under favor of the descent, each leaped upon the fallen tree, and plunged into the ravine, trusting to get a sight of the pursued ere he reached the bottom. In this manner, Huron followed Huron, until Natty began to hope the whole had passed. Others succeeded, however, until quite forty had leaped over the tree; and then he counted them, as the surest mode of ascertaining how many could be behind. Presently all were in the bottom of the glen, quite a hundred feet below him, and some had even ascended part of the opposite hill, when it became evident an inquiry was making as to the direction he had taken. This was the critical moment; and one of nerves less steady, or of a training that had been neglected, would have seized it to rise, and fly. Not so with Deerslayer. He still lay quiet, watching with jealous vigilance every movement below, and fast regaining his breath.

The Hurons now resembled a pack of hounds at fault. Little was said, but each man ran about, examining the dead leaves, as the hound hunts for the lost scent. The great number of moccasins that had passed made the examination difficult, though the in-toe of an Indian was easily to be distinguished from the freer and wider step of a white man. Believing that no more pursuers remained behind, and hoping to steal away unseen, Deerslayer suddenly threw himself over the tree, and fell on the upper side. This achievement appeared to be effected successfully, and hope beat high in the bosom of the fugitive. Rising to his hands and feet, after a moment lost in listening to the sounds in the glen, in order to ascertain if he had been seen, the young man next scrambled to the top of the hill, a distance of only ten yards, in the expectation of getting its brow between him and his pursuers, and himself so far under cover. Even this was effected, and he rose to his feet, walking swiftly but steadily along the summit, in a direction opposite to that in which he had first fled.<sup>5</sup> \* \* \*

1841

5. After gaining more distance on the pursuing Indians, Deerslayer is sighted and pursued, but again he outwits

them: lying flat in a canoe, he safely drifts out of sight down the lake.



*From The Last of the Mohicans, Chapter XXXII*<sup>6</sup>

[*The Hawk-eye of the Indian Wars*]

During the time Uncas<sup>7</sup> was making this disposition of his forces, the woods were as still, and, with the exception of those who had met in council, apparently, as much untenanted, as when they came fresh from the hands of their Almighty Creator. The eye could range, in every direction, through the long and shadowed vistas of the trees; but nowhere was any object to be seen, that did not properly belong to the peaceful and slumbering scenery. Here and there a bird was heard fluttering among the branches of the beeches, and occasionally a squirrel dropped a nut, drawing the startled looks of the party, for a moment, to the place; but the instant the casual interruption ceased, the passing air was heard murmuring above their heads, along that verdant and undulating surface of forest, which spread itself unbroken, unless by stream or lake, over such a vast region of country. Across the tract of wilderness, which lay between the Delawares and the village of their enemies, it seemed as if the foot of man had never trodden, so breathing and deep was the silence in which it lay. But Hawk-eye, whose duty led him foremost in the adventure, knew the character of those with whom he was about to contend, too well, to trust the treacherous quiet.

When he saw his little band again collected, the scout threw "kill-deer"<sup>8</sup> into the hollow of his arm, and making a silent signal that he would be followed, \* \* \* turned, and perceived that his party had been followed thus far by the singing-master.

"Do you know, friend," asked the scout gravely, and perhaps with a little of the pride of conscious deserving in his manner, "that this is a band of rangers, chosen for the most desperate service, and put

6. In this novel, Natty Bumppo, a mature and seasoned scout, is known as Hawk-eye. The central event is the capture of the British Fort William Henry by the French and their Huron allies in 1757. The English commander's daughters, Cora and Alice Munro, have been guided through the forest by Magua, an Indian secret agent of the French, who hopes to gain possession of Cora by betraying the party to the French. Hawk-eye has foiled this plot, assisted by his faithful friends, the Delaware chieftain Chingachgook and his warrior son Uncas, and by David Gamut, a wandering music master.

In the present chapter this party has left the fallen fort under safe conduct

from the French, accompanied by Munro and by Major Duncan Heyward, the fiancé of Alice Munro. But Magua provokes an Indian attack, in which the girls are captured. Alice is gallantly rescued by her fiancé; but under tribal law the Delawares are obliged to permit Magua to depart with Cora, since she is his own captive. However, under the leadership of Uncas, they at once pursue the Hurons, among whom Magua has taken refuge.

7. The "Last of the Mohicans," who is killed in this chapter. Cooper has borrowed the name of a real chief of the Mohegans of early Massachusetts. 8. His rifle, which had become legendary; cf. the swords of famous knights of romance.

under the command of one, who, though another might say it with a better face, will not be apt to leave them idle. It may not be five, it cannot be thirty, minutes before we tread on the body of a Huron, living or dead."

"Though not admonished of your intentions in words," returned David, whose face was a little flushed, and whose ordinarily quiet and unmeaning eyes glimmered with an expression of unusual fire, "your men have reminded me of the children of Jacob going out to battle against the Shechemites, for wickedly aspiring to wedlock with a woman of a race that was favoured of the Lord.<sup>9</sup> Now, I have journeyed far, and sojourned much, in good and evil, with the maiden ye seek; and, though not a man of war, with my loins girded and my sword sharpened, yet would I gladly strike a blow in her behalf."

The scout hesitated, as if weighing the chances of such a strange enlistment in his mind before he answered—

"You know not the use of any we'pon. You carry no rifle; and believe me, what the Mingoes take they will freely give again."

"Though not a vaunting and bloodily disposed Goliath," returned David, drawing a sling from beneath his parti-coloured and uncouth attire, "I have not forgotten the example of the Jewish boy.<sup>1</sup> With this ancient instrument of war have I practised much in my youth, and peradventure the skill has not entirely departed from me."

"Ay!" said Hawk-eye, considering the deer-skin thong and apron, with a cold and discouraging eye; "the thing might do its work."

\* \* \* Pointing in the direction he wished to proceed, Hawk-eye advanced, the band breaking off in single files, and following so accurately in his footsteps, as to leave, if we except Heyward and David, the trail of but a single man.

The party was, however, scarcely uncovered, before a volley from a dozen rifles was heard in their rear, and a Delaware leaping high into the air, like a wounded deer, fell at his whole length, perfectly dead. \* \* \*

Animating his followers by his voice, and his own example, Hawk-eye then gave the word to bear down upon their foes. The charge, in that rude species of warfare, consisted merely in pushing from cover to cover, nigher to the enemy; and in this manœuvre he was instantly and successfully obeyed. The Hurons were compelled to withdraw, and the scene of the contest rapidly changed from the more open ground on which it had commenced, to a spot where the assailed found a thicket to rest upon. Here the struggle was protracted, arduous, and, seemingly, of doubtful issue. The Delawares, though none of them fell, beginning to bleed freely, in

9. Cf. Genesis xxxiv; Jacob slew the Shechemite for this violation.

1. The boy David killed Goliath with a stone from a sling; cf. I Samuel xvii.

consequence of the disadvantage at which they were held. \* \* \*

Then turning, with a prompt and decided air, \* \* \* he called aloud to his Indians, in their own language. His words were answered by a shout, and at a given signal, each warrior made a swift movement around his particular tree. The sight of so many dark bodies, glancing before their eyes at the same instant, drew a hasty, and, consequently, an ineffectual fire from the Hurons. Then, without stopping to breathe, the Delawares leaped, in long bounds, towards the wood, like so many panthers springing upon their prey. Hawk-eye was in front, brandishing his terrible rifle, and animating his followers by his example. A few of the older and more cunning Hurons, who had not been deceived by the artifice which had been practised to draw their fire, now made a close and deadly discharge of their pieces, and justified the apprehensions of the scout, by felling three of his foremost warriors. But the shock was insufficient to repel their impetus of the charge. The Delawares broke into the cover, with the ferocity of their natures, and swept away every trace of resistance by the fury of the onset.

The combat endured only for an instant, hand to hand, and then the assailed yielded ground rapidly, until they reached the opposite margin of the thicket, where they clung to their cover, with the sort of obstinacy that is so often witnessed in hunted brutes. At this critical moment, when the success of the struggle was again becoming doubtful, the crack of a rifle was heard behind the Hurons, and a bullet came whizzing from among some beaver lodges, which were situated in the clearing, in their rear, and was followed by the fierce and appalling yell of the war-whoop.

"There speaks the Sagamore!"<sup>2</sup> shouted Hawk-eye, answering the cry with his own stentorian voice; "we have them now in face and back!"

The effect on the Hurons was instantaneous. Discouraged by so unexpected an assault, from a quarter that left them no opportunity for cover, their warriors uttered a common yell of disappointment and despair, and breaking off in a body, they spread themselves across the opening, heedless of every other consideration but flight. Many fell, in making the experiment, under the bullets and the blows of the pursuing Delawares.

We shall not pause to detail the meeting between the scout and Chingachgook. \* \* \*

At that instant the whoop was given, and a dozen Hurons fell by a discharge from Chingachgook and his band. The shout that followed, was answered by a single war-cry from the forest, and a yell passed through the air, that sounded as though a thousand throats were united in a common effort. The Hurons staggered, deserting

2. *I.e.*, the chief, Chingachgook.

the centre of their line, and Uncas issued through the opening they left, from the forest, at the head of a hundred warriors.

Waving his hands right and left, the young chief pointed out the enemy to his followers, who instantly separated in the pursuit. The war now divided, both wings of the broken Hurons seeking protection in the woods again, hotly pressed by the victorious warriors of the Lenape.<sup>3</sup> A minute might have passed, but the sounds were already receding in different directions, and gradually losing their distinctness beneath the echoing arches of the woods. One little knot of Hurons, however, had disdained to seek a cover, and were retiring, like lions at bay, slowly and sullenly up the acclivity. \* \* \* Magua was conspicuous in this party, both by his fierce and savage mien, and by the air of haughty authority he yet maintained.

In his eagerness to expedite the pursuit, Uncas had left himself nearly alone; but the moment his eye caught the figure of *le Subtil*,<sup>4</sup> every other consideration was forgotten. Raising his cry of battle, which recalled some six or seven warriors, and reckless of the disparity of their numbers, he rushed upon his enemy. *Le Renard*, who watched the movement, paused to receive him with secret joy. But at the moment when he thought the rashness of his impetuous young assailant had left him at his mercy, another shout was given, and *la Longue Carabine*<sup>5</sup> was seen rushing to the rescue, attended by all his white associates. The Huron instantly turned, and commenced a rapid retreat up the ascent.

There was no time for greetings or congratulations; for Uncas, though unconscious of the presence of his friends, continued the pursuit with the velocity of the wind. \* \* \* Still Magua, though daring and much exposed, escaped from every effort against his life, with that sort of fabled protection, that was made to overlook the fortunes of favoured heroes in the legends of ancient poetry. Raising a yell that spoke volumes of anger and disappointment, the subtle chief, when he saw his comrades fallen, darted away from the place, attended by his two only surviving friends, leaving the Delawares engaged in stripping the dead of the bloody trophies of their victory.

But Uncas, who had vainly sought him in the *mélée*, bounded forward in pursuit; Hawk-eye, Heyward, and David, still pressing on his footsteps. The utmost that the scout could effect, was to keep the muzzle of his rifle a little in advance of his friend, to whom, however, it answered every purpose of a charmed shield. Once Magua appeared disposed to make another and a final effort to revenge his losses; but abandoning his intentions so soon as demonstrated, he leaped into a thicket of bushes, through which he was

3. The Lenni Lenape, another name for the Delawares.

4. "*Le Renard Subtil*" ("Crafty Fox") is the nickname given Magua by the

French.

5. "*The Long Rifle*," as the French have nicknamed Hawk-eye.

followed by his enemies, and suddenly entered the mouth of the cave already known to the reader. Hawk-eye, who had only forbore to fire in tenderness to Uncas, raised a shout of success, and proclaimed aloud, that now they were certain of their game. The pursuers dashed into the long and narrow entrance, in time to catch a glimpse of the retreating forms of the Hurons. Their passage through the natural galleries and subterraneous apartments of the cavern was preceded by the shrieks and cries of hundreds of women and children. The place, seen by its dim and uncertain light, appeared like the shades of the infernal regions, across which unhappy ghosts and savage demons were flitting in multitudes.

Still Uncas kept his eye on Magua, as if life to him possessed but a single object. Heyward and the scout still pressed on his rear, actuated, though, possibly, in a less degree, by a common feeling. But their way was becoming intricate, in those dark and gloomy passages, and the glimpses of the retiring warriors less distinct and frequent; and for a moment the trace was believed to be lost, when a white robe was seen fluttering in the further extremity of a passage that seemed to lead up the mountain.

"'Tis Cora," exclaimed Heyward, in a voice in which horror and delight were wildly mingled.

"Cora! Cora!" echoed Uncas, bounding forward like a deer.

"'Tis the maiden!" shouted the scout. "Courage, lady; we come—we come." \* \* \*

"We must close!" said the scout, passing his friends by a desperate leap; "the knaves will pick us all off at this distance; and see; they hold the maiden so as to shield themselves!"

Though his words were unheeded, or rather unheard, his example was followed by his companions, who, by incredible exertions, got near enough to the fugitives to perceive that Cora was borne along between the two warriors, while Magua prescribed the direction and manner of their flight. At this moment the forms of all four were strongly drawn against an opening in the sky, and then they disappeared. Nearly frantic with disappointment, Uncas and Heyward increased efforts that already seemed superhuman, and they issued from the cavern on the side of the mountain, in time to note the route of the pursued. The course lay up the ascent, and still continued hazardous and laborious. \* \* \* But the impetuous young men were rewarded, by finding that, encumbered with Cora, the Hurons were rapidly losing ground in the race.

"Stay; dog of the Wyandots!" exclaimed Uncas, shaking his bright tomahawk at Magua; "a Delaware girl calls stay!"

"I will go no farther," cried Cora, stopping unexpectedly on a ledge of rocks, that overhung a deep precipice, at no great distance from the summit of the mountain. "Kill me if thou wilt, detestable

Huron, I will go no farther."

The supporters of the maiden raised their ready tomahawks with the impious joy that fiends are thought to take in mischief, but Magua suddenly stayed the uplifted arms. The Huron chief, after casting the weapons he had wrested from his companions over the rock, drew his knife, and turned to his captive, with a look in which conflicting passions fiercely contended.

"Woman," he said, "choose; the wigwam or the knife of *le Subtil*!"

Cora regarded him not; but dropping on her knees, with a rich glow suffusing itself over her features, she raised her eyes and stretched her arms towards Heaven, saying, in a meek and yet confiding voice—

"I am thine! do with me as thou seest best!"

"Woman," repeated Magua hoarsely, and endeavouring in vain to catch a glance from her serene and beaming eye, "choose."

But Cora neither heard nor heeded his demand. The form of the Huron trembled in every fibre, and he raised his arm on high, but dropped it again, with a bewildered air, like one who doubted. Once more he struggled with himself, and lifted the keen weapon again—but just then a piercing cry was heard above them, and Uncas appeared, leaping frantically, from a fearful height, upon the ledge. Magua recoiled a step, and one of his assistants, profiting by the chance, sheathed his own knife in the bosom of the maiden.

The Huron sprang like a tiger on his offending and already retreating countryman, but the falling form of Uncas separated the unnatural combatants. Diverted from his object by this interruption, and maddened by the murder he had just witnessed, Magua buried his weapon in the back of the prostrate Delaware, uttering an unearthly shout, as he committed the dastardly deed. But Uncas arose from the blow, as the wounded panther turns upon his foe, and struck the murderer of Cora to his feet, by an effort in which the last of his failing strength was expended. Then, with a stern and steady look, he turned to *le Subtil*, and indicated, by the expression of his eyes, all that he would do, had not the power deserted him. The latter seized the nerveless arm of the unresisting Delaware, and passed his knife into his bosom three several times, before his victim, still keeping his gaze riveted on his enemy with a look of inextinguishable scorn, fell dead at his feet.

"Mercy! mercy! Huron," cried Heyward, from above, in tones nearly choked by horror; "give mercy, and thou shalt receive it!"

Whirling the bloody knife up at the imploring youth, the victorious Magua uttered a cry so fierce, so wild, and yet so joyous, that it conveyed the sounds of savage triumph to the ears of those who fought in the valley, a thousand feet below. He was answered by an

appalling burst from the lips of the scout, whose tall person was just then seen moving swiftly towards him, along those dangerous crags, with steps as bold and reckless, as if he possessed the power to move in middle air. But when the hunter reached the scene of the ruthless massacre, the ledge was tenanted only by the dead.

His keen eye took a single look at the victims, and then shot its fierce glances over the difficulties of the ascent in his front. A form stood at the brow of the mountain, on the very edge of the giddy height, with uplifted arms, in an awful attitude of menace. Without stopping to consider his person, the rifle of Hawk-eye was raised, but a rock, which fell on the head of one of the fugitives below, exposed the indignant and glowing countenance of the honest Gamut. Then Magua issued from a crevice, and stepping with calm indifference over the body of the last of his associates, he leaped a wide fissure, and ascended the rocks at a point where the arm of David could not reach him. A single bound would carry him to the brow of the precipice, and assure his safety. Before taking the leap, however, the Huron paused, and shaking his hand at the scout, he shouted—

“The pale-faces are dogs! the Delawares women! Magua leaves them on the rocks, for the crows!”

Laughing hoarsely, he made a desperate leap, and fell short of his mark; though his hands grasped a shrub on the verge of the height. The form of Hawk-eye had crouched like a beast about to take its spring, and his frame trembled so violently with eagerness, that the muzzle of the half raised rifle played like a leaf fluttering in the wind. Without exhausting himself with fruitless efforts, the cunning Magua suffered his body to drop to the length of his arms, and found a fragment for his feet to rest on. Then summoning all his powers, he renewed the attempt, and so far succeeded, as to draw his knees on the edge of the mountain. It was now, when the body of his enemy was most collected together, that the agitated weapon of the scout was drawn to his shoulder. The surrounding rocks, themselves, were not steadier than the piece became for the single instant that it poured out its contents. The arms of the Huron relaxed, and his body fell back a little, while his knees still kept their position. Turning a relentless look on his enemy, he shook his hand at him, in grim defiance. But his hold loosened, and his dark person was seen cutting the air with its head downwards, for a fleeting instant, until it glided past the fringe of shrubbery which clung to the mountain, in its rapid flight to destruction.<sup>6</sup>

6. After this adventure Hawk-eye returns to the forest, to become the Pathfinder of a later novel.

From The Prairie, Chapter XXXIX<sup>7</sup>

[Death of a Hero]

Middleton gazed about him in growing concern, for no cry, no song, no shout welcomed him among a people, from whom he had so lately parted with regret. His uneasiness, not to say apprehensions, was shared by all his followers. Determination and stern resolution began to assume the place of anxiety in every eye, as each man silently felt for his arms, and assured himself that his several weapons were in a state for instant and desperate service. But there was no answering symptom of hostility on the part of their hosts. Hard-Heart beckoned for Middleton and Paul to follow, leading the way towards the cluster of forms, that occupied the centre of the circle. Here the visitors found a solution of all the movements which had given them so much reason for apprehension.

The trapper was placed on a rude seat, which had been made with studied care, to support his frame in an upright and easy attitude. The first glance of the eye told his former friends, that the old man was at length called upon to pay the last tribute of nature. His eye was glazed and apparently as devoid of sight as of expression. His features were a little more sunken and strongly marked than formerly; but there, all change, so far as exterior was concerned, might be said to have ceased. His approaching end was not to be ascribed to any positive disease, but had been a gradual and mild decay of the physical powers. Life, it is true, still lingered in his system, but it was as though at times entirely ready to depart, and then it would appear to reanimate the sinking form, as if reluctant to give up the possession of a tenement, that had never been undermined by vice or corrupted by disease. It would have been no violent fancy to have imagined, that the spirit fluttered about the placid lips of the old woodsman, reluctant to depart from a shell, that had so long given it an honest and an honourable shelter.

His body was so placed as to let the light of the setting sun fall full upon the solemn features. His head was bare, the long, thin locks of gray fluttering lightly in the evening breeze. His rifle lay

7. In *The Prairie* we find Natty Bumppo, or Leather-Stocking, nearly ninety at the time of his death in 1804. He has abandoned the dwindling forests of the East where, as he thinks, the new settlements have brought a kind of sophisticated softness; and he has followed the frontier to the Indian country of the great western plains. There in his old age his skill and bravery have won him the reverence due a "white sachem" from the Pawnees, among whom he has

settled down to meet his death, still "the trapper" with his hound Hector and the famous rifle, "kill-deer." Duncan Uncas Middleton, who is present at the death scene, is the grandson of Duncan Heyward and Alice Munro of *The Last of the Mohicans*. He and Leather-Stocking had shared some desperate adventures a few years earlier; now, learning of the old trapper's illness, Middleton has come out from the Army post to visit him.



upon his knee, and the other accoutrements of the chase were placed at his side within reach of his hand. Between his feet lay the figure of a hound, with its head crouching to the earth as if it slumbered, and so perfectly easy and natural was its position, that a second glance was necessary to tell Middleton, he saw only the skin of Hector, stuffed, by Indian tenderness and ingenuity, in a manner to represent the living animal. \* \* \*

When he had placed his guests in front of the dying man, Hard-Heart, after a pause, that proceeded as much from sorrow as decorum, leaned a little forward and demanded—

“Does my father hear the words of his son?”

“Speak,” returned the trapper, in tones that issued from his inmost chest, but which were rendered awfully distinct by the death-like stillness, that reigned in the place. “I am about to depart from the village of the Loups, and shortly shall be beyond the reach of your voice.”

“Let the wise chief have no cares for his journey,” continued Hard-Heart with an earnest solicitude, that led him to forget, for the moment, that others were waiting to address his adopted parent; “a hundred Loups shall clear his path from briars.”

“Pawnee, I die, as I have lived, a Christian man,” resumed the trapper with a force of voice, that had the same startling effect on his hearers, as is produced by the trumpet, when its blast rises suddenly and freely on the air after its obstructed sounds have been heard struggling in the distance; “as I came into life, so will I leave it. Horses and arms are not needed to stand in the presence of the Great Spirit of my people. He knows my colour and according to my gifts will he judge my deeds.”

“My father will tell my young men how many Mingoes he has struck and what acts of valour and justice he has done, that they may know how to imitate him.”

“A boastful tongue is not heard in the heaven of a white man!” solemnly returned the old man. “What I have done He has seen. His eyes are always open. That which has been well done, he will remember; wherein I have been wrong will he not forget to chastise, though he will do the same in mercy. No, my son; a Pale-face may not sing his own praises, and hope to have them acceptable before his God!”

A little disappointed, the young partisan stepped modestly back, making way for the recent comers to approach. Middleton took one of the meagre hands of the trapper and struggling to command his voice, he succeeded in announcing his presence. The old man listened like one whose thoughts were dwelling on a very different subject, but when the other had succeeded in making him understand, that he was present, an expression of joyful recognition passed over his faded features—

"I hope you have not so soon forgotten those, whom you so materially served!" Middleton concluded. "It would pain me to think my hold on your memory was so light."

"Little that I have ever seen is forgotten," returned the trapper; "I am at the close of many weary days, but there is not one among them all, that I could wish to overlook. I remember you with the whole of your company; ay, and your gran'ther, that went before you. I am glad, that you have come back upon these plains, for I had need of one, who speaks the English, since little faith can be put in the traders of these regions. Will you do a favour, lad, to an old and dying man?"

"Name it," said Middleton; "it shall be done."

"It is a far journey to send such trifles," resumed the old man, who spoke at short intervals as strength and breath permitted; "A far and weary journey is the same; but kindnesses and friendships are things not to be forgotten. There is a settlement among the Otsego hills—"

"I know the place," interrupted Middleton, observing that he spoke with increasing difficulty; "proceed to tell me what you would have done."

"Take then this rifle, and pouch, and horn, and send them to the person, whose name is graven on the plates of the stock. A trader cut the letters with his knife, for it is long, that I have intended to send him such a token of my love!"

"It shall be so. Is there more that you could wish?"

"Little else have I to bestow. My traps I give to my Indian son; for honestly and kindly has he kept his faith. Let him stand before me."

Middleton explained to the chief, what the trapper had said, and relinquished his own place to the other.

"Pawnee," continued the old man, always changing his language to suit the person he addressed, and not unfrequently according to the ideas he expressed, "it is a custom of my people for the father to leave his blessing with the son, before he shuts his eyes forever. This blessing I give to you; take it, for the prayers of a Christian man will never make the path of a just warrior, to the blessed prairies, either longer or more tangled. May the God of a white man look on your deeds with friendly eyes, and may you never commit an act that shall cause him to darken his face. I know not whether we shall ever meet again. There are many traditions concerning the place of Good Spirits. It is not for one like me, old and experienced though I am, to set up my opinions against a nation's. You believe in the blessed prairies, and I have faith in the sayings of my fathers. If both are true, our parting will be final; but if it should prove, that the same meaning is hid under different words, we shall yet stand together, Pawnee, before the face of your Wahcondah, who

will then be no other than my God. There is much to be said in favour of both religions, for each seems suited to its own people, and no doubt it was so intended. I fear I have not altogether followed the gifts of my colour, inasmuch as I find it a little painful to give up for ever the use of the rifle, and the comforts of the chase. But then the fault has been my own, seeing that it could not have been His. Ay, Hector," he continued, leaning forward a little, and feeling for the ears of the hound, "our parting has come at last, dog, and it will be a long hunt. You have been an honest, and a bold, and a faithful hound. Pawnee, you cannot slay the pup on my grave, for where a Christian dog falls, there he lies forever; but you can be kind to him, after I am gone for the love you bear his master."

"The words of my father, are in my ears," returned the young partisan, making a grave and respectful gesture of assent. \* \* \*

The old man made a long, and apparently a musing pause. At times he raised his eyes wistfully as if he would again address Middleton, but some innate feeling appeared always to suppress his words. The other, who observed his hesitation, enquired in a way most likely to encourage him to proceed, whether there was aught else, that he could wish to have done.

"I am without kith or kin in the wide world!" the trapper answered; "when I am gone, there will be an end of my race. We have never been chiefs, but honest, and useful in our way, I hope it cannot be denied, we have always proved ourselves. My father lies buried near the sea, and the bones of his son will whiten on the prairies—"

"Name the spot, and your remains shall be placed by the side of your father," interrupted Middleton.

"Not so, not so, Captain. Let me sleep, where I have lived, beyond the din of the settlements. Still I see no need, why the grave of an honest man should be hid, like a Red-skin in his ambushment. I paid a man in the settlements to make and put a graven stone at the head of my father's resting place. It was the value of twelve beaver-skins, and cunningly and curiously was it carved! Then it told to all comers that the body of such a Christian lay beneath; and it spoke of his manner of life, of his years, and of his honesty. When we had done with the Frenchers in the old war, I made a journey to the spot, in order to see that all was rightly performed, and glad I am to say the workman had not forgotten his faith."

"And such a stone you would have at your grave?"

"I! no, no, I have no son but Hard-Heart, and it is little, that an Indian knows of White fashions and usages. Besides I am his debtor, already, seeing it is so little I have done, since I have lived in his tribe. The rifle might bring the value of such a thing—but then I know, it will give the boy pleasure to hang the piece in his hall, for

many is the deer and the bird that he has seen to destroy. No, no, the gun must be sent to him, whose name is graven on the lock!"

"But there is one, who would gladly prove his affection in the way you wish; he, who owes you not only his deliverance from so many dangers, but who inherits a heavy debt of gratitude from his ancestors. The stone shall be put at the head of your grave."

The old man extended his emaciated hand, and gave the other a squeeze of thanks.

"I thought, you might be willing to do it, but I was backward in asking the favour," he said, "seeing that you are not of my kin. Put no boastful words on the same, but just the name, the age and the time of the death, with something from the holy book; no more, no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on 'arth; I need no more." \* \* \*

The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes, alone, had occasionally opened and shut. When opened, his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds, which hung around the western horizon, reflecting the bright colours, and giving form and loveliness to the glorious tints of an American sunset. The hour—the calm beauty of the season—the occasion, all conspired to fill the spectators with solemn awe. Suddenly, while musing on the remarkable position, in which he was placed, Middleton felt the hand, which he held, grasp his own with incredible power, and the old man, supported on either side by his friends, rose upright to his feet. For a moment he looked about him, as if to invite all in presence to listen, (the lingering remnant of human frailty,) and then with a fine military elevation of the head, and with a voice that might be heard in every part of that numerous assembly, he pronounced the word—"Here!"

A movement so entirely unexpected, and the air of grandeur and humility, which were so remarkably united in the mien of the trapper, together with the clear and uncommon force of his utterance, produced a short period of confusion in the faculties of all present. When Middleton and Hard-Heart, who had each involuntarily extended a hand to support the form of the old man, turned to him again, they found, that the subject of their interest was removed forever beyond the necessity of their care. They mournfully placed the body in its seat, and Le Balafre arose to announce the termination of the scene to the tribe. The voice of the old Indian seemed a sort of echo from that invisible world, to which the meek spirit of the trapper had just departed.

"A valiant, a just and a wise warrior has gone on the path, which will lead him to the blessed grounds of his people!" he said. "When the voice of the Wahcondah called him, he was ready to answer. Go, my children; remember the just chief of the Pale-faces, and clear your own tracks from briars!"

The grave was made beneath the shade of some noble oaks. It has been carefully watched to the present hour by the Pawnees of the Loup, and is often shown to the traveller and the trader as a spot where a just White-man sleeps. In due time the stone was placed at its head, with the simple inscription, which the trapper had himself requested. The only liberty taken by Middleton was to add,—“May no wanton hand disturb his remains!”

1827

## WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

(1794-1878)

William Cullen Bryant was one of the great personalities of his age, an individual whose force, courage, and dynamic liberalism as an editor provided effective leadership in American cultural and political life from the Age of Jackson through the Civil War and Reconstruction period. As poet and critic he gave an American formulation to the romantic movement; he provided an example of disciplined imagination and precise expression; he opposed to the usual insipid generalization about nature his close observation of the natural object; and finally, he encouraged American poets to seek cultural independence from Europe by writing of their own American experience. To be sure, Bryant inherited, with his American generation, a measure of neoclassical restraint and didacticism that troubles the reader of a later generation. Yet in spite of the vast changes in the sensibility of readers and the nature of modern experience, a few of his poems are timeless, while the reader who can recapture the sense of that older time will find in many others a moving inspiration and a genuine insight.

Born in Cummington, in the Berkshire foothills of western Massachusetts, a fine natural setting for the boyhood of a poet of nature, Bryant benefited also from the companionship of his father, Dr. Peter Bryant, an enthusiastic naturalist and a persistent walker in the woods. No wonder that he later remembered his reading, at the age of sixteen, the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge, when “a thousand springs seemed to gush up at once into my heart, and the face of nature, of a sudden, to change into a strange freshness.” He was then at Williams College, where he remained only a year, but his reading had already included much beyond the elementary schooling provided at Cummington—he had access to his father’s ample library and to those of two clergymen, one his uncle, who tutored him in classical languages and literature.

He had written verses from the age of nine; when he was only fourteen his father sent to a Boston publisher his satire, *The Embargo* (1808), which reflected the Federalist resentment against Jefferson’s trade restrictions, intended to avert war with England. The next year a

second volume of his juvenile poems appeared in Boston, and in 1811, after one year at college, he wrote the first draft of "Thanatopsis." These early poems reflected influences that he soon learned to absorb in his own independent style: the neo-classical forms of Addison, Pope, and Johnson; the attitudes of the "graveyard school," especially as represented by Blair, Thomson, Young, Gray, and Henry Kirke White; and finally, the mature romanticism of Scott, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

For a time, literature became secondary to the law. After four years of preparation, he was admitted to the bar, and practiced at Great Barrington from 1816 to 1825. In this interval he married, and held a political office, but the man of letters would not be suppressed. In 1817 his publication of "Thanatopsis" drew general attention to his genius; it was widely copied and became at once a familiar poem. He began to write sporadically for the magazines, and his essay on "Early American Verse" (1818) established him as a discerning critic. In 1821 he was called to read "The Ages" as the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard. His first collected *Poems* appeared in Boston in 1821. In 1825 he accepted a minor editorial position in New York, and within a year he became assistant editor of the *New York Evening Post*.

In New York, to the end of his days, he was a dominant leader in literature and in public causes. He became the intimate of Cooper and of such Knickerbockers as Irving, Halleck, and

Verplanck, and the friend, often the adviser, of later arrivals. In spite of the sometimes long intervals between volumes, he remained a familiar poet of the people; an illustrated edition of 1846 became a popular favorite, and his last approved collection, the *Household Edition* of 1876, remained in print into the present century. He made six extensive tours abroad and published two widely read volumes of *Letters of a Traveller*. In his declining years he furnished his countrymen with good poetic translations of the *Iliad* (1870) and the *Odyssey* (1871-1872). His *Library of Poetry and Song* (1871-1872) was the first great critical anthology in America. Meanwhile he had become editor in chief of the *Evening Post* (1829), which soon became his property, and, under his management, one of our first great national newspapers.

Bryant's persistent themes, besides religion and nature, dealt with humanitarian reform and national morality. Although his boyhood satire was leveled at Jefferson's embargo, he became a great leader of the northern Democrats; just as in religion, having rejected, in "Thanatopsis" the strict Calvinism of Cummingtown, he passed through a stage of Deism to become, in mature life, a prominent leader of the Unitarian movement. As a liberal Democrat he waged continual newspaper warfare for various freedoms—freedom of speech, of religion, and of labor association and collective bargaining, free trade, and the freedom of the masses from oppressive debtor laws and the exploita-

tion of banking and currency regulations. In defense of one freedom he helped destroy the Democratic party, for he waged continuous warfare for free soil and, finally, the freedom of the slaves. As a poet he was able to express the common idealism of his countrymen at a level of propriety and dignity so high as to make him, for the time, their most revered spokesman.

*The Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant*, Household Edition, 1876, is his final text and provides the basis for the text of poems reprinted below. *The Life and Works of William Cullen Bryant*,

6 vols., edited by Parke Godwin, 1883–1884, is the standard collection; there is no comprehensive collection of Bryant's prose, and most of his editorial writing has not been garnered from the *Post*. The Roslyn Edition of the *Poetical Works*, edited by H. C. Sturges, 1903, is the best available one-volume edition, containing also a good bibliography. Tremaine McDowell's *Bryant: Representative Selections*, American Writers Series, 1935, is excellent in text, introduction, and notes.

Parke Godwin's *Life* (1883), the first two volumes of his *Life and Works*, is sound for its time. Reliable one-volume studies are John Bigelow, *William Cullen Bryant*, American Men of Letters Series, 1890; W. A. Bradley, *William Cullen Bryant*, 1905; and H. H. Peckham, *Gotham Yankee*, 1950. Allan Nevins, *The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism*, 1922, gives much new light on Bryant.

## Thanatopsis<sup>1</sup>

To him who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language; for his gayer hours  
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
Into his darker musings, with a mild  
And healing sympathy, that steals away  
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts  
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight  
Over thy spirit, and sad images  
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,  
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,  
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart,—  
Go forth, under the open sky, and list  
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—  
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air,—  
Comes a still voice—

5

10

15

Yet a few days, and thee  
The all-beholding sun shall see no more

1. "Thanatopsis" (meaning "a meditation on death"), written in Bryant's seventeenth year (1811), was frequently revised, before and after its first publication (*North American Review*, September, 1817). It is still one of the most familiar of American poems. Recalling the British "graveyard school" in general, and specifically the poems of Henry Kirke White, Blair, Southey, and Cow-

per, it asserts its independence by its American largeness of landscape. It also expresses Bryant's early rejection of orthodox Calvinism—the young Deist stoically compares death with the crumbling of the insensible clod. In a few years he had swung to the Unitarian position (see "To a Waterfowl") and become a leader of Unitarian liberalism.

In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,  
 Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears, 20  
 Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist  
 Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim  
 Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,  
 And, lost each human trace, surrendering up  
 Thine individual being, shalt thou go 25  
 To mix forever with the elements,  
 To be a brother to the insensible rock  
 And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain  
 Turns with his share,<sup>2</sup> and treads upon. The oak  
 Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould. 30

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place  
 Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish  
 Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down  
 With patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,  
 The powerful of the earth, the wise, the good, 35  
 Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,  
 All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills  
 Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, the vales  
 Stretching in pensive quietness between;  
 The venerable woods—rivers that move 40  
 In majesty, and the complaining brooks  
 That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,  
 Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,—  
 Are but the solemn decorations all  
 Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun, 45  
 The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,  
 Are shining on the sad abodes of death,  
 Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread  
 The globe are but a handful to the tribes  
 That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings 50  
 Of morning, pierce the Barcan<sup>3</sup> wilderness,  
 Or lose thyself in the continuous woods  
 Where rolls the Oregon,<sup>4</sup> and hears no sound,  
 Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there:  
 And millions in those solitudes, since first 55  
 The flight of years began, have laid them down  
 In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone.  
 So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw  
 In silence from the living, and no friend  
 Take note of thy departure? All that breathe 60

2. Plowshare.

3. The desert of Barca (in Libya, North Africa) is compared with the "Great

American Desert" then shown on maps.

4. The Indian name; now the Columbia River.



Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh  
 When thou are gone, the solemn brood of care  
 Plod on, and each one as before will chase  
 His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave  
 Their mirth and their employments, and shall come 65  
 And make their bed with thee. As the long train  
 Of ages glide away, the sons of men,  
 The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes  
 In the full strength of years, matron and maid,  
 The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man— 70  
 Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,  
 By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
 The innumerable caravan, which moves  
 To that mysterious realm, where each shall take 75  
 His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
 Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,  
 Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed  
 By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,  
 Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch 80  
 About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

1811

1817, 1821

## The Yellow Violet

When beechen buds begin to swell,  
 And woods the blue-bird's warble know,  
 The yellow violet's modest bell  
 Peeps from the last year's leaves below.

Ere russet fields their green resume, 5  
 Sweet flower, I love, in forest bare,  
 To meet thee, when thy faint perfume  
 Alone is in the virgin air.

Of all her train, the hands of Spring  
 First plant thee in the watery mould, 10  
 And I have seen thee blossoming  
 Beside the snow-bank's edges cold.

Thy parent sun, who bade thee view  
 Pale skies, and chilling moisture sip,  
 Has bathed thee in his own bright hue, 15  
 And streaked with jet thy glowing lip.

Yet slight thy form, and low thy seat,  
 And earthward bent thy gentle eye,  
 Unapt the passing view to meet  
 When loftier flowers are flaunting nigh. 20

Oft, in the sunless April day,  
 Thy early smile has stayed my walk;  
 But midst the gorgeous blooms of May,  
 I passed thee on thy humble stalk.

So they, who climb to wealth, forget 25  
 The friends in darker fortunes tried.  
 I copied them—but I regret  
 That I should ape the ways of pride.

And when again the genial hour  
 Awakes the painted tribes of light, 30  
 I'll not o'erlook the modest flower  
 That made the woods of April bright.

1814

1821

### To a Waterfowl

Whither, 'midst falling dew,  
 While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,  
 Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue  
 Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye 5  
 Might mark thy distant flight, to do thee wrong,  
 As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,  
 Thy figure floats along.

Seck'st thou the plashy brink  
 Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide, 10  
 Or where the rocking billows rise and sink  
 On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power, whose care  
 Teaches thy way along that pathless coast, —  
 The desert and illimitable air, 15  
 Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fann'd,  
 At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere;  
 Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,  
 Though the dark night is near. 20

And soon that toil shall end,  
 Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,  
 And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,  
 Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven  
 Hath swallowed up thy form, yet, on my heart  
 Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,  
 And shall not soon depart. 25

He, who, from zone to zone,  
 Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
 In the long way that I must trace alone, 30  
 Will lead my steps aright.

1815

1818, 1821

## A Forest Hymn

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned  
 To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,  
 And spread the roof above them—ere he framed  
 The lofty vault, to gather and roll back  
 The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood, 5  
 Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down,  
 And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks  
 And supplication. For his simple heart  
 Might not resist the sacred influences  
 Which, from the stilly twilight of the place, 10  
 And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven  
 Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound  
 Of the invisible breath that swayed at once  
 All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed  
 His spirit with the thought of boundless power 15  
 And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why  
 Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect  
 God's ancient sanctuaries, and adore  
 Only among the crowd, and under roofs  
 That our frail hands have raised? Let me, at least, 20  
 Here, in the shadow of this aged wood,  
 Offer one hymn—thrice happy, if it find  
 Acceptance in His ear.

Father, thy hand  
 Hath reared these venerable columns, thou

Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look down 25  
 Upon the naked earth, and, forthwith, rose  
 All these fair ranks of trees. They, in thy sun,  
 Budded, and shook their green leaves in thy breeze,  
 And shot toward heaven. The century-living crow  
 Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died 30  
 Among their branches, till, at last, they stood,  
 As now they stand, massy, and tall, and dark,  
 Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold  
 Communion with his Maker. These dim vaults,  
 These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride 35  
 Report not. No fantastic carvings show  
 The boast of our vain race to change the form  
 Of thy fair works. But thou art here—thou fill'st  
 The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds  
 That run along the summit of these trees 40  
 In music; thou art in the cooler breath  
 That from the inmost darkness of the place  
 Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the ground,  
 The fresh moist ground, are all instinct with thee.  
 Here is continual worship;—Nature, here, 45  
 In the tranquillity that thou dost love,  
 Enjoys thy presence. Noiselessly, around,  
 From perch to perch, the solitary bird  
 Passes; and yon clear spring, that, midst its herbs,  
 Wells softly forth and wandering steep the roots 50  
 Of half the mighty forest, tells no tale  
 Of all the good it does. Thou hast not left  
 Thyself without a witness, in the shades,  
 Of thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and grace  
 Are here to speak of thee. This mighty oak— 55  
 By whose immovable stem I stand and seem  
 Almost annihilated—not a prince,  
 In all that proud old world beyond the deep,  
 E'er wore his crown as loftily as he  
 Wears the green coronal of leaves with which 60  
 Thy hand had graced him. Nestled at his root  
 Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare  
 Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower,  
 With scented breath and look so like a smile,  
 Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould, 65  
 An emanation of the indwelling Life.  
 A visible token of the upholding Love,  
 That are the soul of this great universe.

My heart is awed within me when I think  
 Of the great miracle that still goes on, 70  
 In silence, round me—the perpetual work  
 Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed  
 Forever. Written on thy works I read  
 The lesson of thy own eternity.  
 Lo! all grow old and die—but see again, 75  
 How on the faltering footsteps of decay  
 Youth presses—ever gay and beautiful youth  
 In all its beautiful forms. These lofty trees  
 Wave not less proudly that their ancestors  
 Moulder beneath them. Oh, there is not lost 80  
 One of earth's charms: upon her bosom yet,  
 After the flight of untold centuries,  
 The freshness of her far beginning lies  
 And yet shall lie. Life mocks the idle hate  
 Of his arch-enemy Death—yea, seats himself 85  
 Upon the tyrant's throne—the sepulchre,  
 And of the triumphs of his ghastly foe  
 Makes his own nourishment. For he came forth  
 From thine own bosom, and shall have no end.

There have been holy men who hid themselves 90  
 Deep in the woody wilderness, and gave  
 Their lives to thought and prayer, till they outlived  
 The generation born with them, nor seemed  
 Less aged than the hoary trees and rocks  
 Around them;—and there have been holy men 95  
 Who deemed it were not well to pass life thus.  
 But let me often to these solitudes  
 Retire, and in thy presence reassure  
 My feeble virtue. Here its enemies,  
 The passions, at thy plainer footsteps shrink 100  
 And tremble and are still. O God! when thou  
 Dost scare the world with tempests, set on fire  
 The heavens with falling thunderbolts, or fill,  
 With all the waters of the firmament,  
 The swift dark whirlwind that uproots the woods 105  
 And drowns the villages; when, at thy call,  
 Uprises the great deep and throws himself  
 Upon the continent, and overwhelms  
 Its cities—who forgets not, at the sight  
 Of these tremendous tokens of thy power, 110  
 His pride, and lays his strifes and follies by?

Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face  
 Spare me and mine, nor let us need the wrath  
 Of the mad unchained elements to teach  
 Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate, 115  
 In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,  
 And to the beautiful order of thy works  
 Learn to conform the order of our lives.

1825, 1832

## The Past

Thou unrelenting Past!  
 Strong are the barriers round thy dark domain,  
 And fetters, sure and fast,  
 Hold all that enter thy unbreathing reign.

Far in thy realm withdrawn, 5  
 Old empires sit in sullenness and gloom,  
 And glorious ages gone  
 Lie deep within the shadow of thy womb.

Childhood, with all its mirth,  
 Youth, Manhood, Age that draws us to the ground, 10  
 And last, Man's Life on earth,  
 Glide to thy dim dominions, and are bound.

'Thou hast my better years;  
 Thou hast my earlier friends, the good, the kind,  
 Yielded to thee with tears— 15  
 'The venerable form,<sup>5</sup> the exalted mind.

My spirit yearns to bring  
 The lost ones back—yearns with desire intense,  
 And struggles hard to wring  
 Thy bolts apart, and pluck thy captives thence. 20

In vain; thy gates deny  
 All passage save to those who hence depart;  
 Nor to the streaming eye  
 Thou giv'st them back—nor to the broken heart.

In thy abysses hide 25  
 Beauty and excellence unknown; to thee  
 Earth's wonder and her pride  
 Are gathered, as the waters to the sea;

5. Identified as his father, Dr. Peter Bryant, who died in 1820. Cf. the last stanza.

Labors of good to man,  
Unpublished charity, unbroken faith, 30  
Love, that midst grief began,  
And grew with years, and faltered not in death.

Full many a mighty name  
Lurks in thy depths, unuttered, unrevered;  
With thee are silent fame, 35  
Forgotten arts, and wisdom disappeared.

Thine for a space are they—  
Yet shalt thou yield thy treasures up at last:  
Thy gates shall yet give way,  
Thy bolts shall fall, inexorable Past! 40

All that of good and fair  
Has gone into thy womb from earliest time,  
Shall then come forth to wear  
The glory and the beauty of its prime.

They have not perished—no! 45  
Kind words, remembered voices once so sweet,  
Smiles, radiant long ago,  
And features, the great soul's apparent seat.

All shall come back; each tie  
Of pure affection shall be knit again; 50  
Alone shall Evil die,  
And Sorrow dwell a prisoner in thy reign.

And then shall I behold  
Him, by whose kind paternal side I sprung,  
And her, who, still and cold, 55  
Fills the next grave—the beautiful and young.<sup>6</sup>

1828, 1832

## To the Fringed Gentian<sup>7</sup>

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,  
And colored with the heaven's own blue,  
That openest when the quiet light  
Succeeds the keen and frosty night—

6. His favorite sister, Mrs. Sarah Bryant Shaw, who died in 1824.

7. "Draw your own images, in describing nature, from what you observe around you," Bryant wrote his brother (Godwin, *Life*, Vol. I, p. 281). A botanist from youth, he took the lead in

opposition to stereotyped references to nature. For a discussion of his successful realism in this direction see Norman Foerster, "Bryant," in his *Nature in American Literature* (1923). And cf. "Robert of Lincoln," below.

Thou comest not when violets lean 5  
 O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,  
 Or columbines, in purple dressed,  
 Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,  
 When woods are bare and birds are flown, 10  
 And frosts and shortening days portend  
 The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye  
 Look through its fringes to the sky,  
 Blue—blue—as if that sky let fall 15  
 A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see  
 The hour of death draw near to me,  
 Hope, blossoming within my heart,  
 May look to heaven as I depart. 20

1829

1832

### The Prairies<sup>8</sup>

These are the gardens of the Desert, these  
 The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,  
 For which the speech of England has no name<sup>9</sup>—  
 The Prairies. I behold them for the first,  
 And my heart swells, while the dilated sight 5  
 Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch  
 In airy undulations, far away,  
 As if the Ocean, in his gentlest swell,  
 Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,  
 And motionless forever. Motionless?— 10  
 No—they are all unchained again. The clouds  
 Sweep over with their shadows, and, beneath,  
 The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;<sup>1</sup>  
 Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase  
 The sunny ridges. Breezes of the South! 15  
 Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,  
 And pass the prairie-hawk that, poised on high,

8. Written on the poet's first sight of the prairies, on a visit to his brothers in Illinois in 1832.

9. "Prairie," in the tongue of the French settlers, signified "meadow."

1. " \* \* \* when the shadows of the clouds are passing rapidly over them, the face of the ground seems to fluctuate and toss like billows of the sea" [from Bryant's note].



Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not<sup>2</sup>—ye have played  
 Among the palms of Mexico and vines  
 Of Texas, and have crisped the limpid brooks 20  
 That from the fountains of Sonora<sup>3</sup> glide  
 Into the calm Pacific—have ye fanned  
 A nobler or a lovelier scene than this?  
 Man hath no part in all this glorious work:  
 The hand that built the firmament hath heaved 25  
 And smoothed these verdant swells, and sown their slopes  
 With herbage, planted them with island-groves,  
 And hedged them round with forests. Fitting floor  
 For this magnificent temple of the sky—  
 With flowers whose glory and whose multitude 30  
 Rival the constellations! The great heavens  
 Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,—  
 A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue,  
 Than that which bends above our Eastern hills.

As o'er the verdant waste I guide my steed, 35  
 Among the high rank grass that sweeps his sides  
 The hollow beating of his footstep seems  
 A sacrilegious sound. I think of those  
 Upon whose rest he tramples. Are they here—  
 The dead of other days?—and did the dust 40  
 Of these fair solitudes once stir with life  
 And burn with passion? Let the mighty mounds<sup>4</sup>  
 That overlook the rivers, or that rise  
 In the dim forest crowded with old oaks,  
 Answer. A race, that long has passed away, 45  
 Built them; a disciplined and populous race  
 Heaped, with long toil, the earth, while yet the Greek  
 Was hewing the Pentelicus<sup>5</sup> to forms  
 Of symmetry, and rearing on its rock  
 The glittering Parthenon. These ample fields 50  
 Nourished their harvests, here their herds were fed,  
 When haply by their stalls the bison lowed,  
 And bowed his manèd shoulder to the yoke.  
 All day this desert murmured with their toils,  
 Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked, and wooed 55  
 In a forgotten language, and old tunes,

2. "I have seen the prairie-hawk balancing himself in the air for hours together, apparently over the same spot, probably watching his prey" [Bryant's note].

3. State in northwest Mexico.

4. Ascribed to the supposed ancient "Mound Builders"; now associated with

Indian burials. See Bryant's earlier reference to former civilizations on this continent in "Thanatopsis," ll. 50–57.

5. Or Pentelikon, a Greek mountain; source of the fine marble of such ancient buildings in nearby Athens as the Parthenon (l. 50), celebrated temple of Athena.

From instruments of unremembered form,  
 Gave the soft winds a voice. The red-man came—  
 The roaming hunter-tribes, warlike and fierce,  
 And the mound-builders vanished from the earth. 60  
 The solitude of centuries untold  
 Has settled where they dwelt. The prairie-wolf  
 Hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den  
 Yawns by my path. The gopher mines the ground  
 Where stood their swarming cities. All is gone; 65  
 All—save the piles of earth that hold their bones,  
 The platforms where they worshipped unknown gods,  
 The barriers which they builded from the soil  
 To keep the foe at bay—till o'er the walls  
 The wild beleaguers broke, and, one by one, 70  
 The strongholds of the plain were forced, and heaped  
 With corpses. The brown vultures of the wood  
 Flocked to those vast uncovered sepulchres,  
 And sat, unscared and silent, at their feast.  
 Haply some solitary fugitive, 75  
 Lurking in marsh and forest, till the sense  
 Of desolation and of fear became  
 Bitterer than death, yielded himself to die.  
 Man's better nature triumphed then. Kind words  
 Welcomed and soothed him; the rude conquerors 80  
 Seated the captive with their chiefs; he chose  
 A bride among their maidens, and at length  
 Seemed to forget—yet ne'er forgot—the wife  
 Of his first love, and her sweet little ones,  
 Butchered, amid their shrieks, with all his race. 85

Thus change the forms of being. Thus arise  
 Races of living things, glorious in strength,  
 And perish, as the quickening breath of God  
 Fills them, or is withdrawn. The red-man, too,  
 Has left the blooming wilds he ranged so long, 90  
 And, nearer to the Rocky Mountains, sought  
 A wilder hunting-ground. The beaver builds  
 No longer by these streams, but far away,  
 On waters whose blue surface ne'er gave back  
 The white man's face—among Missouri's springs, 95  
 And pools whose issues swell the Oregon<sup>e</sup>—  
 He rears his little Venice. In these plains  
 The bison feeds no more. Twice twenty leagues  
 Beyond remotest smoke of hunter's camp,

6. Cf. "Thanatopsis." Now the Columbia River.

Roams the majestic brute, in herds that shake 100  
The earth with thundering steps—yet here I meet  
His ancient footprints stamped beside the pool.

Still this great solitude is quick with life.  
Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers  
They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds, 105  
And birds, that scarce have learned the fear of man,  
Are here, and sliding reptiles of the ground,  
Startlingly beautiful. The graceful deer  
Bounds to the wood at my approach. The bee,  
A more adventurous colonist than man, 110  
With whom he came across the eastern deep,  
Fills the savannas with his murmurings,  
And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,  
Within the hollow oak. I listen long  
'To his domestic hum, and think I hear 115  
The sound of that advancing multitude  
Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the ground  
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice  
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn  
Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds 120  
Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain  
Over the dark brown furrows. All at once  
A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my dream,  
And I am in the wilderness alone.

1832

1833, 1834

### The Battle-Field<sup>7</sup>

Once this soft turf, this rivulet's sands,  
Were trampled by a hurrying crowd,  
And fiery hearts and armed hands  
Encountered in the battle-cloud.

Ah! never shall the land forget 5  
How gushed the life-blood of her brave—  
Gushed, warm with hope and courage yet,  
Upon the soil they fought to save.

7. The battlefield is that of political justice; as a great liberal editor, Bryant was constantly and savagely attacked. An abolition Democrat, he was vilified by the slavery Democrats for his free-soil and antislavery editorials, while conservatives of both parties attacked

him for his humanitarian, liberal attitude toward banking, currency, and debtor laws, criminal and penal procedures, freedom of speech and of contract and labor association. The ninth stanza of this poem provides one of the familiar quotations of literature.

Now all is calm, and fresh, and still;  
     Alone the chirp of flitting bird, 10  
 And talk of children on the hill,  
     And bell of wandering kine, are heard.

No solemn host goes trailing by  
     The black-mouthed gun and staggering wain;  
 Men start not at the battle-cry, 15  
     Oh, be it never heard again!

Soon rested those who fought; but thou  
     Who minglest in the harder strife  
 For truths which men receive not now,  
     Thy warfare only ends with life. 20

A friendless warfares lingering long  
     Through weary day and weary year;  
 A wild and many-weaponed throng  
     Hang on thy front, and flank, and rear.

Yet nerve thy spirit to the proof, 25  
     And blench not at thy chosen lot,  
 The timid good may stand aloof,  
     The sage may frown—yet faint thou not.

Nor heed the shaft too surely cast,  
     The foul and hissing bolt of scorn; 30  
 For with thy side shall dwell, at last,  
     The victory of endurance born.

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;  
     Th' eternal years of God are hers;  
 But Error, wounded, writhes in pain, 35  
     And dies among his worshippers.

Yea, though thou lie upon the dust,  
     When they who helped thee flee in fear,  
 Die full of hope and manly trust,  
     Like those who fell in battle here. 40

Another hand thy sword shall wield,  
     Another hand the standard wave,  
 Till from the trumpet's mouth is pealed  
     The blast of triumph o'er thy grave.

Robert of Lincoln<sup>8</sup>

- Merrily swinging on brier and weed,  
 Near to the nest of his little dame,  
 Over the mountain-side or mead,  
 Robert of Lincoln is telling his name:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link, 5  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Snug and safe is that nest of ours,  
 Hidden among the summer flowers.  
     Chee, chee, chee.
- Robert of Lincoln is gayly drest, 10  
 Wearing a bright black wedding-coat;  
 White are his shoulders and white his crest.  
 Hear him call in his merry note:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink; 15  
 Look, what a nice new coat is mine,  
 Sure there was never a bird so fine.  
     Chee, chee, chee.
- Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,  
 Pretty and quiet, with plain brown wings, 20  
 Passing at home a patient life,  
 Broods in the grass while her husband sings:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Brood, kind creature; you need not fear 25  
 Thieves and robbers while I am here.  
     Chee, chee, chee.
- Modest and shy as a nun is she;  
 One weak chirp is her only note.  
 Braggart and prince of braggarts is he, 30  
 Pouring boasts from his little throat:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Never was I afraid of man;  
 Catch me, cowardly knaves, if you can! 35  
     Chee, chee, chee.

8. The bobolink is a familiar bird in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, where Bryant in youth began his intimate study of nature with his father, a naturalist and physician. The descriptions of the bird's remarkable mating garb (ll. 10-14), of his unusual song

uttered in flight, and of his domestic character, distinguish this among all bird poems for accuracy and charm. (See R. T. Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds*, pp. 199 and 209; he records the sound of the flight note as "pink"—compare Bryant's "spink.")

Six white eggs on a bed of hay,  
 Flecked with purple, a pretty sight!  
 There as the mother sits all day,  
 Robert is singing with all his might: 40  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 Nice good wife, that never goes out,  
 Keeping house while I frolic about.  
     Chee, chee, chee. 45

Soon as the little ones chip the shell,  
 Six wide mouths are open for food;  
 Robert of Lincoln bestirs him well,  
 Gathering seeds for the hungry brood. 50  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 This new life is likely to be  
 Hard for a gay young fellow like me.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln at length is made 55  
 Sober with work, and silent with care;  
 Off is his holiday garment laid,  
 Half forgotten that merry air:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink; 60  
 Nobody knows but my mate and I  
 Where our nest and our nestlings lie.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

Summer wanes; the children are grown;  
 Fun and frolic no more he knows; 65  
 Robert of Lincoln's a humdrum crone;  
 Off he flies, and we sing as he goes:  
     Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,  
     Spink, spank, spink;  
 When you can pipe that merry old strain, 70  
 Robert of Lincoln, come back again.  
     Chee, chee, chee.

## The Death of Lincoln<sup>1</sup>

Oh, slow to smite and swift to spare,  
Gentle and merciful and just!  
Who, in the fear of God, didst bear  
The sword of power, a nation's trust!

In sorrow by thy bier we stand, 5  
Amid the awe that hushes all,  
And speak the anguish of a land  
That shook with horror at thy fall.

Thy task is done; the bond are free:  
We bear thee to an honored grave, 10  
Whose proudest monument shall be  
The broken fetters of the slave.

Pure was thy life; its bloody close  
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,  
Among the noble host of those 15  
Who perished in the cause of Right.

1865

1866, 1871

## The Flood of Years<sup>2</sup>

A mighty Hand, from an exhaustless Urn,  
Pours forth the never-ending Flood of Years,  
Among the nations. How the rushing waves  
Bear all before them! On their foremost edge, 5  
And there alone, is Life. The Present there  
Tosses and foams, and fills the air with roar  
Of mingled noises. There are they who toil,  
And they who strive, and they who feast, and they  
Who hurry to and fro. The sturdy swain—  
Woodman and delver with the spade—is there, 10  
And busy artisan beside his bench,  
And pallid student with his written roll.

1. Lincoln died by the assassin's bullet on April 15, 1865, and his funeral train at once started its long pilgrimage to Springfield, Illinois. According to Godwin, Bryant wrote his poem at the request of the Committee of Arrangements for the ceremony in the city of New York. As "Abraham Lincoln: Poetical Tribute to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln" the poem appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1866.

2. For the stages of Bryant's religious thought see the poems "Thanatopsis" and "To a Waterfowl." According to Godwin, when Bryant was questioned concerning the faith expressed in "The Flood of Years," he replied, "I believe in the everlasting life of the soul; and it seems to me that immortality would be but an imperfect gift without the recognition in the life to come of those who are dear to us."

A moment on the mounting billow seen,  
 The flood sweeps over them and they are gone.  
 There groups of revellers whose brows are twined 15  
 With roses, ride the topmost swell awhile,  
 And as they raise their flowing cups and touch  
 The clinking brim to brim, are whirled beneath  
 The waves and disappear. I hear the jar  
 Of beaten drums, and thunders that break forth 20  
 From cannon, where the advancing billow sends  
 Up to the sight long files of armed men,  
 That hurry to the charge through flame and smoke.  
 The torrent bears them under, whelmed and hid  
 Slayer and slain, in heaps of bloody foam. 25  
 Down go the steed and rider, the plumed chief  
 Sinks with his followers; the head that wears  
 The imperial diadem goes down beside  
 The felon's with cropped ear and branded cheek.  
 A funeral-train—the torrent sweeps away 30  
 Bearers and bier and mourners. By the bed  
 Of one who dies men gather sorrowing,  
 And women weep aloud; the flood rolls on;  
 The wail is stifled and the sobbing group  
 Borne under. Hark to that shrill, sudden shout, 35  
 The cry of an applauding multitude,  
 Swayed by some loud-voiced orator who wields  
 The living mass as if he were its soul!  
 The waters choke the shout and all is still.  
 Lo! next a kneeling crowd, and one who spreads 40  
 The hands in prayer, the engulfing wave o'ertakes  
 And swallows them and him. A sculptor wields  
 The chisel, and the stricken marble grows  
 To beauty; at his easel, eager-eyed,  
 A painter stands, and sunshine at his touch 45  
 Gathers upon his canvas, and life glows;  
 A poet, as he paces to and fro,  
 Murmurs his sounding lines. Awhile they ride  
 The advancing billow, till its tossing crest  
 Strikes them and flings them under, while their tasks 50  
 Are yet unfinished. See a mother smile  
 On her young babe that smiles to her again;  
 The torrent wrests it from her arms; she shrieks  
 And weeps, and amidst her tears is carried down.  
 A beam like that of moonlight turns the spray 55  
 To glistening pearls; two lovers, hand in hand,  
 Rise on the billowy swell and fondly look



Into each other's eyes. The rushing flood  
Flings them apart: the youth goes down; the maid  
With hands outstretched in vain, and streaming eyes, 60  
Waits for the next high wave to follow him.

An aged man succeeds; his bending form  
Sinks slowly. Mingling with the sullen stream  
Gleam the white locks, and then are seen no more. 65

Lo! wider grows the stream—a sea-like flood 65  
Saps earth's walled cities; massive palaces  
Crumble before it; fortresses and towers  
Dissolve in the swift waters; populous realms  
Swept by the torrent see their ancient tribes  
Engulfed and lost; their very languages 70  
Stifled, and never to be uttered more.

I pause and turn my eyes, and looking back  
Where that tumultuous flood has been, I see  
The silent ocean of the Past, a waste  
Of waters weltering over graves, its shores 75  
Strewn with the wreck of fleets where mast and hull  
Drop away piecemeal; battlemented walls  
Frown idly, green with moss, and temples stand  
Unroofed, forsaken by the worshipper.

There lie memorial stones, whence time has gnawed 80  
The graven legends, thrones of kings o'erturned,  
The broken altars of forgotten gods,  
Foundations of old cities and long streets  
Where never fall of human foot is heard,  
On all the desolate pavement. I behold 85

Dim glimmerings of lost jewels, far within  
The sleeping waters, diamond, sardonyx,  
Ruby and topaz, pearl and chrysolite,  
Once glittering at the banquet on fair brows  
That long ago were dust, and all around 90  
Strewn on the surface of that silent sea

Are withering bridal wreaths, and glossy locks  
Shorn from dear brows, by loving hands, and scrolls  
O'er written, haply with fond words of love  
And vows of friendship, and fair pages flung 95  
Fresh from the printer's engine. There they lie  
A moment, and then sink away from sight.

I looked, and the quick tears are in my eyes,  
For I behold in every one of these  
A blighted hope, a separate history 100  
Of human sorrows, telling of dear ties  
Suddenly broken, dreams of happiness

Dissolved in air, and happy days too brief  
 That sorrowfully ended, and I think  
 How painfully must the poor heart have beat 105  
 In bosoms without number, as the blow  
 Was struck that slew their hope and broke their peace.

Sadly I turn and look before, where yet  
 The Flood must pass, and I behold a mist  
 Where swarm dissolving forms, the brood of Hope, 110  
 Divinely fair, that rest on banks of flowers,  
 Or wander among rainbows, fading soon  
 And reappearing, haply giving place  
 To forms of grisly aspect such as Fear  
 Shapes from the idle air—where serpents lift 115  
 The head to strike, and skeletons stretch forth  
 The bony arm in menace. Further on  
 A belt of darkness seems to bar the way  
 Long, low, and distant, where the Life to come  
 Touches the Life that is. The Flood of Years 120  
 Rolls toward it near and nearer. It must pass  
 That dismal barrier. What is there beyond?  
 Hear what the wise and good have said. Beyond  
 That belt of darkness, still the Years roll on  
 More gently, but with not less mighty sweep. 125  
 They gather up again and softly bear  
 All the sweet lives that late were overwhelmed  
 And lost to sight, all that in them was good,  
 Noble, and truly great, and worthy of love—  
 The lives of infants and ingenuous youths, 130  
 Sages and saintly women who have made  
 Their households happy; all are raised and borne  
 By that great current in its onward sweep,  
 Wandering and rippling with caressing waves  
 Around green islands fragrant with the breath 135  
 Of flowers that never wither. So they pass  
 From stage to stage along the shining course  
 Of that bright river, broadening like a sea.  
 As its smooth eddies curl along their way  
 They bring old friends together; hands are clasped 140  
 In joy unspeakable; the mother's arms  
 Again are folded round the child she loved  
 And lost. Old sorrows are forgotten now,  
 Or but remembered to make sweet the hour  
 That overpays them; wounded hearts that bled 145  
 Or broke are healed forever. In the room  
 Of this grief-shadowed present, there shall be

A Present in whose reign no grief shall gnaw  
The heart, and never shall a tender tie  
Be broken; in whose reign the eternal Change  
That waits on growth and action shall proceed  
With everlasting Concord hand in hand.

1876

1876



# Symbolic and Ethical Idealism

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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

(1804-1864)

To understand Hawthorne the reader must set aside an attractive legend. Only accidental circumstances support the tradition of the shy recluse, brooding in solitude upon the gloomier aspects of Puritan New England, whose writings are a kind of spiritual autobiography. Instead, during most of his life, Hawthorne was decidedly a public figure, capable, when necessary, of a certain urbanity. As a writer, he set out quite consciously to exploit his antiquarian enthusiasms and his understanding of the colonial history of New England. He was absorbed by the enigmas of evil and of moral responsibility, interwoven with man's destiny in nature and in eternity; but in this interest he was not unusual, for he shared it with such contemporaries as Poe, Emerson, and Melville, and with others more remote, such as Milton and Shakespeare.

It is true that for some years after his graduation from col-

lege he lived quietly in quiet Salem, but a young man engrossed in historical study and in learning the writer's craft is not notably queer if he does not seek society or marriage, especially if he is poor. In later years Hawthorne successfully managed his official duties, made a large circle of friends, and performed the extrovert functions of a foreign consul with competence, if without joy. The true Hawthorne is revealed just as much by "The Old Manse," an essay light-spirited and affectionate, as by "Rappaccini's Daughter," "Ethan Brand," or *The Scarlet Letter*. We understand better his full manliness and humanity now that Professor Randall Stewart has restored their pristine vigor to the gently henpecked texts that Mrs. Hawthorne published of his *Note-Books*.

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, July 8, 1804, Hawthorne was five generations removed from his Puritan American forebears.

When the boy was twelve, his widowed mother took him to live with her brother in Maine, but old Salem had already enkindled his antiquarian inclination. To Salem he returned to prepare for college. At Bowdoin College (1821-1825), where he was, he said, "An idle student," but "always reading," he made a friend of Longfellow, his classmate, and lifelong intimates of Horatio Bridge and of Franklin Pierce, later president of the United States.

The next twelve years, of so-called "seclusion," in his mother's Salem home, were years of literary apprenticeship. He read widely, preparing himself to be the chronicler of the antiquities and the spiritual temper of colonial New England. His first novel, *Fanshawe* (1828), an abortive chronicle of Bowdoin life, was recalled and almost completely destroyed. He made observant walking trips about Massachusetts; remote portions of New England he frequently visited as the guest of his uncle, whose extensive stage-coach business provided the means. In 1832 there appeared in a gift book, *The Token*, his first published tales, including "The Gentle Boy." Other stories followed, in *The Token* and various magazines, to be collected in 1837 as *Twice-Told Tales* (enlarged in 1842), a volume of masterpieces, but only a few discerning critics, such as Poe, then understood what he was doing.

He had become secretly engaged to Sophia Peabody in 1838, and since his stories were not gaining popular support, he

secured remunerative employment in the Boston Custom House. Seven months at Brook Farm, a socialistic co-operative, led him to abandon the idea of taking his bride there; on their marriage in 1842 they settled in Concord, at the Old Manse, Emerson's ancestral home. There he spent four idyllic years, during which the stories of *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846) were published serially and as a volume.

His sales were still meager, and he returned to Salem as surveyor in the Custom House (1846-1849). He lost this position, with other Democrats, at the next election, but in 1850 he published *The Scarlet Letter*, which made his fame, changed his fortune, and gave to our literature its first symbolic novel, a year before the appearance of Melville's *Moby-Dick*. In this novel were concentrated the entire resources of Hawthorne's creative personality and experience.

After a short time in the Berkshires, Hawthorne settled in 1852 at the Wayside, Concord, which became his permanent home. He was at the height of his creative activity. *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), a great novel of family decadence, was followed by *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), a minor novel on the Brook Farm experiment. Among the tales of *The Snow-Image* (1851), were "Ethan Brand" and "The Great Stone Face." *A Wonder Book* (1852) and *Tanglewood Tales* (1853) entered the literature of juvenile classics.

*The Life of Franklin Pierce*

(1852) was recognized handsomely by the new president, who appointed his college friend as consul at Liverpool (1853-1857). Hawthorne faithfully performed the duties, which he found uncongenial, while seeing much of England and recording his impressions in the *English Note-Books* (published after his death) and *Our Old Home* (1863), a sheaf of essays. A long holiday on the Continent resulted in the *French and Italian Note-Books* (not published in his lifetime), and *The Marble Faun* (1860), a novel with an Italian setting, whose moral allegory, while not satisfactorily clarified, continues to interest the student of Hawthorne's thought. In 1860 Hawthorne brought his family back to the Wayside, where he died four years later, in 1864.

Although in many of his stories, and in the two great novels, Hawthorne created genuine characters and situations, he holds his permanent audience primarily by the interest and the consistent vitality of his criticism of life. Beyond his remarkable sense of the past, which gives a genuine ring to the historical reconstructions, beyond his precise and simple style, which is in the great tradition of familiar narrative, the principal appeal of his work is in the quality of its allegory, always richly ambivalent, providing enigmas which each reader solves in his own terms. Reference is made, in his stories, to his discovery of the Puritan past of his family, the perse-

cutors of Quakers and "witches"; but wherever his interest started, it led him to a long investigation of the problems of moral and social responsibility. His enemies are intolerance, the hypocrisy that hides the common sin, and the greed that refuses to share joy; he fears beyond everything withdrawal from mankind, the cynical suspicion, the arrogant perfectionism that cannot bide its mortal time—whatever divorces the pride-ridden intellect from the common heart of humanity. It is not enough to call him the critic of the Puritan; the Quaker or the transcendental extremist might be equally guilty; and Aylmer and Ethan Brand are not Puritans. His remedy is in nature and in the sweetness of a world freed not from sin, but from the corrosive sense of guilt.

The standard edition is *The Complete Works* \* \* \*, 12 vols., edited by George P. Lathrop, 1883. *The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals* was edited by Newton Arvin, 1929. Randall Stewart edited *The American Notebooks of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 1932, and *The English Notebooks*, 1941. One-volume collections are the *Complete Novels and Selected Tales*, edited by Norman Holmes Pearson, 1939; *Hawthorne's Short Stories*, edited by Newton Arvin, 1946; and *Hawthorne: Representative Selections*, edited by Austin Warren, 1934.

Recent revaluation began with *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, by Randall Stewart, 1948. George E. Woodberry's *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 1902, is still not superseded for its scope and data. See also Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*, 2 vols., 1884; Mark Van Doren, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 1949; H. H. Waggoner, *Hawthorne, A Critical Study*, 1955; R. R. Male, *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, 1957; and Harry Levin, *Power of Blackness*, 1960.

## Young Goodman Brown<sup>1</sup>

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithce put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afearcd of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as

1. Medieval literature abounds in descriptions of the "Witches' Sabbath," a midnight orgy of evil rites at which Satan himself sometimes presided. Hawthorne was certainly familiar with Cotton Mather's description, in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693), of such "Diabolical Sacraments" as taking place in Massachusetts. Hawthorne's story is a memorable portrayal of a

Puritan community, but its theme is universal. The concept of mankind's natural depravity was a principal determinant in Puritan thought, but Goodman Brown's corruption through his loss of simple faith in the goodness of mankind represents a timeless tragedy. This story appeared in the *New England Magazine* for April, 1835, and was collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846).

could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South<sup>2</sup> was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court,<sup>3</sup> were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not

2. *I.e.*, Old South Church, Boston, famous as the secret rendezvous of American patriots before the Revolution. However, the Church was erected in 1729, while the story seems to be set

somewhat earlier, before 1702. See the reference to "King William's court," just below.

3. William III was King of England from 1689 to 1702.



thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept"—

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own heart, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war.<sup>4</sup> They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too— But these are state secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman<sup>5</sup> like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day."<sup>6</sup>

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown,

4. King Philip, or Metacomet, was the last leader of Indian resistance in southern New England, which ended with his death in 1676.

5. Generally, "farmer," but then some-

times denoting any man of humble station, conventionally addressed as "Goodman."

6. The day of the midweek sermon, generally Thursday.

considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody<sup>7</sup> Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage,<sup>8</sup> and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane"—

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in

7. A contraction of "Goodwife," then a term of civility in addressing a wife of humble station (*cf.* "Goodman"). Goody Cloyse, like Goody Cory and Martha Carrier, who appear later, were among the "witches" of Salem sentenced in

1692 by a court of magistrates of which one of Hawthorne's forebears was a member.

8. Wild celery. In the literature of witchcraft a plant credited with magic powers.

a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young

man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the way-side, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much devilry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the

murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice, of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian pow-wow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the

demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their

pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves and

shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. "Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one."

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when



he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Cookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

## The Minister's Black Veil

### A Parable<sup>9</sup>

The sexton stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house, pulling busily at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week days. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper's door. The first glimpse of the clergyman's figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

"But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?" cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the semblance of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly his meditative way towards the meeting-house. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper's pulpit.

"Are you sure it is our parson?" inquired Goodman Gray of the sexton.

"Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper," replied the sexton. "He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute, of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon."

The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person, of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday's garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely con-

9. The interpretation of this parable has intrigued generations of readers. The dying speech of Parson Hooper connects the symbol of his black veil with the hypocritical secret sins of mankind. A clue has also been sought in Hawthorne's footnote to the title of the story, which reads as follows: "Another clergyman in New England, Mr. Joseph Moody, of York, Maine, who died about eighty years since, made himself remarkable by the same eccentricity that is here related of the Reverend Mr. Hooper. In

his case, however, the symbol had a different import. In early life he had accidentally killed a beloved friend; and from that day till the hour of his own death, he hid his face from men." Stewart suggests (*Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p. 257) that Hawthorne purposely refrained from emphasizing a single cause for the destructive estrangement of Hooper from mankind. The story first appeared in *The Token* for 1836, and was collected in *Twice-Told Tales* (1837).

ceased his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meeting-house. "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house, and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads towards the door; many stood upright, and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation of his people. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner, a white-haired great-grandsire, who occupied an arm-chair in the centre of the aisle. It was strange to observe how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder, till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath, as he gave out the psalm; it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them.

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered was marked by

the same characteristics of style and manner as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, at least, no violence; and yet, with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger's visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapt in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned the Sabbath day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery; while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary heads, saluted the middle aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children's heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes

fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

"How strange," said a lady, "that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!"

"Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper's intellects," observed her husband, the physician of the village. "But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?"

"Truly do I," replied the lady; "and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!"

"Men sometimes are so," said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eyelids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy. From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial hopes, that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth, and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them, and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

"Why do you look back?" said one in the procession to his partner.

"I had a fancy," replied she, "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand."

"And so had I, at the same moment," said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a sympathetic smile where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride's cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike paleness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one where they tolled the wedding knell. After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil.

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern-keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates that the panic seized himself, and he well-nigh lost his wits by his own waggery.

It was remarkable that of all the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper, wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked

advisers, nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment. If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance. There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received them with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper's forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputies returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a general synod.

But there was one person in the village unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister's first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: it was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

"No," said she aloud, and smiling, "there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on."

Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly.

"There is an hour to come," said he, "when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then."

"Your words are a mystery, too," returned the young lady. "Take away the veil from them, at least."

"Elizabeth, I will," said he, "so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!"

"What grievous affliction hath befallen you," she earnestly inquired, "that you should thus darken your eyes forever?"

"If it be a sign of mourning," replied Mr. Hooper, "I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil."

"But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?" urged Elizabeth. "Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!"

The color rose into her cheeks as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again—that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.

"If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; "and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But, in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

"And do you feel it then, at last?" said he mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

"Have patience with me, Elizabeth!" cried he, passionately. "Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no dark-



ness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil—it is not for eternity! O! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!”

“Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face,” said she.

“Never! It cannot be!” replied Mr. Hooper.

“Then farewell!” said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingles with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial ground; for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the grave-stones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel more strongly than aught else, that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave plausibility to the whispers, that Mr. Hooper's conscience tortured him for some great crime too horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus, from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could never reach him. It was said that ghost and fiend consorted with him there. With self-shudderings and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping darkly within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole world.

Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by.

Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared; though ever, as he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their own. Such were the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his visage! Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face. But many were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor Belcher's<sup>1</sup> administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the election sermon. Covered with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the representatives, and wrought so deep an impression, that the legislative measures of that year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway.

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, irreproachable in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil, he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: he had one congregation in the church, and a more crowded one in the churchyard; and having wrought so late into the evening, and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper's turn to rest.

Several persons were visible by the shaded candle-light, in the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine, who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse, no hired hand-

1. Jonathan Belcher was governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire from 1730 to 1741.

maiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death pillow, with the black veil still swathed about his brow, and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult gasp of his faint breath caused it to stir. All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber, and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

For some time previous, his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long, deep, and irregular inspiration seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside.

"Venerable Father Hooper," said he, "the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity?"

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head; then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubtful, he exerted himself to speak.

"Yea," said he, in faint accents, "my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted."

"And is it fitting," resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, "that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment may pronounce; is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face!"

And thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden energy, that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both

his hands from beneath the bedclothes, and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolute to struggle, if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

"Never!" cried the veiled clergyman. "On earth, never!"

"Dark old man!" exclaimed the affrighted minister, "with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?"

Father Hooper's breath heaved; it rattled in his throat; but, with a mighty effort, grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed; and there he sat, shivering with the arms of death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful, at that last moment, in the gathered terrors of a lifetime. And yet the faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper's lips.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"

While his auditors shrank from one another, in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the Black Veil!

1836, 1837

### The Birthmark<sup>4</sup>

In the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who

4. Hawthorne often made the point that a strictly scientific view of life destroyed human values (cf. "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Ethan Brand," below). In "The Birthmark" he associates intellectual arrogance with the demand for moral perfection, often reflected in a puritanical abasement of mortal life in the pursuit of an immediate heaven. Hawthorne recognized this persistent human dilemma in an early memorandum

of the idea for this story (*The American Notebooks*, entries for 1837): "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection; yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily." Cf. the tragic and bewildered speech of Aylmer's dying wife. The story appeared in *The Pioneer* for March, 1843, and was collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846).

not long before our story opens had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one. He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife. In those days when the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. We know not whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over Nature. He had devoted himself, however, too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weaned from them by any second passion. His love for his young wife might prove the stronger of the two; but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own.

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke.

"Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?"

"No, indeed," said she, smiling; but perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she blushed deeply. "To tell you the truth it has been so often called a charm that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so."

"Ah, upon another face perhaps it might," replied her husband; "but never on yours. No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection."

"Shocks you, my husband!" cried Georgiana, deeply hurt; at first reddening with momentary anger, but then bursting into tears. "Then why did you take me from my mother's side? You cannot love what shocks you!"

To explain this conversation it must be mentioned that in the centre of Georgiana's left cheek there was a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her complexion—a healthy though delicate bloom—the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed

it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness. Its shape bore not a little similarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pygmy size. Georgiana's lovers were wont to say that some fairy at her birth hour had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. It must not be concealed, however, that the impression wrought by this fairy sign manual varied exceedingly, according to the difference of temperament in the beholders. Some fastidious persons—but they were exclusively of her own sex—affirmed that the bloody hand, as they chose to call it, quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana's beauty, and rendered her countenance even hideous. But it would be as reasonable to say that one of those small blue stains which sometimes occur in the purest statuary marble would convert the Eve of Powers<sup>5</sup> to a monster. Masculine observers, if the birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness without the semblance of a flaw. After his marriage,—for he thought little or nothing about the matter before,—Aylmer discovered that this was the case with himself.

Had she been less beautiful,—if Envy's self could have found aught else to sneer at,—he might have felt his affection heightened by the prettiness of this mimic hand, now vaguely portrayed, now lost, now stealing forth again and glimmering to and fro with every pulse of emotion that throbbed within her heart; but seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mold, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

5. Hiram Powers (1805–1873), American sculptor, whose studio in Florence became a center for the expatriate

American art colony. Hawthorne refers to his masterpiece, "Eve Before the Fall."

At all the seasons which should have been their happiest, he invariably and without intending it, nay, in spite of a purpose to the contrary, reverted to this one disastrous topic. Trifling as it at first appeared, it so connected itself with innumerable trains of thought and modes of feeling that it became the central point of all. With the morning twilight Aylmer opened his eyes upon his wife's face and recognized the symbol of imperfection; and when they sat together at the evening hearth his eyes wandered stealthily to her cheek, and beheld, flickering with the blaze of the wood fire, the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped. Georgiana soon learned to shudder at his gaze. It needed but a glance with the peculiar expression that his face often wore to change the roses of her cheek into a deathlike paleness, amid which the crimson hand was brought strongly out, like a bas-relief of ruby on the whitest marble.

Late one night when the lights were growing dim, so as hardly to betray the stain on the poor wife's cheek, she herself, for the first time, voluntarily took up the subject.

"Do you remember, my dear Aylmer," said she, with a feeble attempt at a smile, "have you any recollection of a dream last night about this odious hand?"

"None! none whatever!" replied Aylmer, starting; but then he added, in a dry, cold tone, affected for the sake of concealing the real depth of his emotion, "I might well dream of it; for before I fell asleep it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy."

"And you did dream of it?" continued Georgiana, hastily; for she dreaded lest a gush of tears should interrupt what she had to say. "A terrible dream! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget this one expression?—'It is in her heart now; we must have it out!' Reflect, my husband; for by all means I would have you recall that dream."

The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one. Aylmer now remembered his dream. He had fancied himself with his servant Aminadab, attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark; but the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana's heart; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away.

When the dream had shaped itself perfectly in his memory, Aylmer sat in his wife's presence with a guilty feeling. Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments.

Until now he had not been aware of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and of the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace.

"Aylmer," resumed Georgiana, solemnly, "I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal birthmark. Perhaps its removal may cause cureless deformity; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Again: do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little hand which was laid upon me before I came into the world?"

"Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon the subject," hastily interrupted Aylmer. "I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal."

"If there be the remotest possibility of it," continued Georgiana, "let the attempt be made at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust,—life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life! You have deep science. All the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of two small fingers? Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?"

"Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife," cried Aylmer, rapturously. "doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought—thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgiana, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully competent to render this dear cheek as faultless as its fellow; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work! Even Pygmalion,<sup>6</sup> when his sculptured woman assumed life, felt not greater ecstacy than mine will be."

"It is resolved, then," said Georgiana, faintly smiling. "And, Aylmer, spare me not, though you should find the birthmark take refuge in my heart at last."

Her husband tenderly kissed her cheek—her right cheek—not that which bore the impress of the crimson hand.

The next day Aylmer apprised his wife of a plan that he had formed whereby he might have opportunity for the intense thought and constant watchfulness which the proposed operation would require; while Georgiana, likewise, would enjoy the perfect repose essential to its success. They were to seclude themselves in the extensive apartments occupied by Aylmer as a laboratory, and where, dur-

6. Cf. the Greek legend of Pygmalion and Galatea, in which this transforma-

tion was permitted by Aphrodite, the goddess of love.



ing his toilsome youth, he had made discoveries in the elemental powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud region and of the profoundest mines; he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster man, her masterpiece. The latter pursuit, however, Aylmer had long laid aside in unwilling recognition of the truth—against which all seekers sooner or later stumble—that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. Now, however, Aylmer resumed these half-forgotten investigations; not, of course, with such hopes or wishes as first suggested them; but because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana.

As he led her over the threshold of the laboratory, Georgiana was cold and tremulous. Aylmer looked cheerfully into her face, with intent to reassure her, but was so startled with the intense glow of the birthmark upon the whiteness of her cheek that he could not restrain a strong convulsive shudder. His wife fainted.

"Aminadab! Aminadab!" shouted Aylmer, stamping violently on the floor.

Forthwith there issued from an inner apartment a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace. This personage had been Aylmer's underworker during his whole scientific career, and was admirably fitted for that office by his great mechanical readiness, and the skill with which, while incapable of comprehending a single principle, he executed all the details of his master's experiments. With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable carthiness that incrustated him, he seemed to represent man's physical nature; while Aylmer's slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.

"Throw open the door of the boudoir, Aminadab," said Aylmer, "and burn a pastil."

"Yes, master," answered Aminadab, looking intently at the life-

less form of Georgiana; and then he muttered to himself, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark."

When Georgiana recovered consciousness she found herself breathing an atmosphere of penetrating fragrance, the gentle potency of which had recalled her from her deathlike faintness. The scene around her looked like enchantment. Aylmer had converted those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman. The walls were hung with gorgeous curtains, which imparted the combination of grandeur and grace that no other species of adornment can achieve; and as they fell from the ceiling to the floor, their rich and ponderous folds, concealing all angles and straight lines, appeared to shut in the scene from infinite space. For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds. And Aylmer, excluding the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, impurpled radiance. He now knelt by his wife's side, watching her earnestly, but without alarm; for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude.

"Where am I? Ah, I remember," said Georgiana, faintly; and she placed her hand over her cheek to hide the terrible mark from her husband's eyes.

"Fear not, dearest!" exclaimed he. "Do not shrink from me! Believe me, Georgiana, I even rejoice in this single imperfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it."

"Oh, spare me!" sadly replied his wife. "Pray do not look at it again. I never can forget that convulsive shudder."

In order to soothe Georgiana, and, as it were, to release her mind from the burden of actual things, Aylmer now put in practice some of the light and playful secrets which science had taught him among its profounder lore. Airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her, imprinting their momentary footsteps on beams of light. Though she had some indistinct idea of the method of these optical phenomena, still the illusion was almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world. Then again, when she felt a wish to look forth from her seclusion, immediately, as if her thoughts were answered, the procession of external existence flitted across a screen. The scenery and the figures of actual life were perfectly represented, but with that bewitching, yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow so much more attractive than the original. When wearied of this, Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of

earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

"It is magical!" cried Georgiana. "I dare not touch it."

"Nay, pluck it," answered Aylmer,—“pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave nothing save its brown seed vessels; but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself.”

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

"There was too powerful a stimulus," said Aylmer, thoughtfully.

To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention. It was to be effected by rays of light striking upon a polished plate of metal. Georgiana assented; but, on looking at the result, was affrighted to find the features of the portrait blurred and indefinable; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.

Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment he came to her flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long dynasty of the alchemists, who spent so many ages in quest of the universal solvent by which the golden principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium; "but," he added, "a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it." Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the elixir vitæ.<sup>7</sup> He more than intimated that it was at his option to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years, perhaps interminably; but that it would produce a discord in Nature which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nostrum, would find cause to curse.

"Aylmer, are you in earnest?" asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear. "It is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it."

"Oh, do not tremble, my love," said her husband. "I would not wrong either you or myself by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives; but I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little hand."

7. The elixir of life, whose function Hawthorne describes. The other "solvent" sought by the alchemists, for transmuting base substances into gold, is more usually referred to as "the philosopher's stone."

At the mention of the birthmark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank as if a red-hot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labors. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer reappeared and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across the kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

"And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-colored liquid. "It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life."

"In one sense it is," replied Aylmer; "or, rather, the elixir of immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strength of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it."

"Why do you keep such a terrific drug?" inquired Georgiana in horror.

"Do not mistrust me, dearest," said her husband, smiling; "its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this in a vase of water, freckles may be washed away as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the rosiest beauty a pale ghost."

"Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana, anxiously.

"Oh, no," hastily replied her husband; "this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper."

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations and whether the confinement of the rooms and the temperature of the atmosphere agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift that Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air or taken with her food. She fancied likewise, but it might be altogether fancy, that there was a stirring up of her system—a strange, indefinite sensation

creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasantly, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself pale as a white rose and with the crimson birthmark stamped upon her cheek. Not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her husband found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of the philosophers of the middle ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar who created the prophetic Brazen Head.\* All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the *Transactions of the Royal Society*, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders or proposing methods whereby wonders might be wrought.

But to Georgiana the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career, its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with the circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veriest clod of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, revered Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown

8. These important pioneers of science were all popularly regarded as "magicians": St. Albertus Magnus (died 1280), German theologian; Cornelius Agrippa (died 1535), German theologian, whose scientific contributions verged on the occult, as did those of Paracelsus (died 1541), a Swiss scientist

whose theory of disease advanced modern medicine. The "famous friar" was Roger Bacon (died 1294), English Franciscan scholar, early pioneer of modern inductive science, to whom were popularly attributed occult writings and magical devices such as the apocryphal "Brazen Head" here mentioned.

for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter, and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius in whatever sphere might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books," said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you."

"It has made me worship you more than ever," said she.

"Ah, wait for this one success," rejoined he, "then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it. But come, I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me, dearest."

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gaiety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but a little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close; and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself.

He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal hap-

pininess or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous mien that he had assumed for Georgiana's encouragement!

"Carefully now, Aminadab; carefully, thou human machine; carefully, thou man of clay!" muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant. "Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over."

"Ho! ho!" mumbled Aminadab. "Look, master! look!"

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

"Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?" cried he, impetuously. "Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!"

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink; for my share in it is far less than your own."

"No, no, Georgiana!" said Aylmer, impatiently; "it must not be."

"I submit," replied she calmly. "And, Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison if offered by your hand."

"My noble wife," said Aylmer, deeply moved; "I knew not the height and depth of your nature until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being with a strength of which I had no previous conception.<sup>9</sup> I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fail us we are ruined."

"Why did you hesitate to tell me this?" asked she.

"Because, Georgiana," said Aylmer, in a low voice, "there is danger."

"Danger? There is but one danger—that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!" cried Georgiana. "Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!"

"Heaven knows your words are too true," said Aylmer, sadly. "And now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested."

He conducted her back and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure Georgiana became rapt in musings. She

9. In ancient superstition, the shape of the stigma often suggested hidden po-

tentialities or experience, good or bad, in the person so marked.

considered the character of Aylmer, and did it completer justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honorable love—so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

The sound of her husband's footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet containing a liquor colorless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and tension of spirit than of fear or doubt.

"The concoction of the draught has been perfect," said he, in answer to Georgiana's look. "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail."

"Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer," observed his wife, "I might wish to put off this birthmark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, me thinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die."

"You are fit for heaven without tasting death!" replied her husband. "But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant."

On the window seat there stood a geranium diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a living verdure.

"There needed no proof," said Georgiana, quietly. "Give me the goblet. I joyfully stake all upon your word."

"Drink, then, thou lofty creature!" exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. "There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect."

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

"It is grateful," said she with a placid smile. "Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of



unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset."

She spoke the last words with a gentle reluctance, as if it required almost more energy than she could command to pronounce the faint and lingering syllables. Scarcely had they loitered through her lips ere she was lost in slumber. Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotions proper to a man the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested. Mingled with this mood, however, was the philosophic investigation characteristic of the man of science. Not the minutest symptom escaped him. A heightened flush of the cheek, a slight irregularity of breath, a quiver of the eyelid, a hardly perceptible tremor through the frame,—such were the details which, as the moments passed, he wrote down in his folio volume. Intense thought had set its stamp upon every previous page of that volume, but the thoughts of years were all concentrated upon the last.

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once, by a strange and unaccountable impulse, he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however, in the very act; and Georgiana, out of the midst of her deep sleep, moved uneasily and murmured as if in remonstrance. Again Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the marble paleness of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever; but the birthmark, with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful; its departure was more awful still. Watch the stain of the rainbow fading out of the sky, and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

"By Heaven! it is well-nigh gone!" said Aylmer to himself, in almost irrepressible ecstacy. "I can scarcely trace it now. Success! success! And now it is like the faintest rose color. The lightest flush of blood across her cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!"

He drew aside the window curtain and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

"Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass!" cried Aylmer, laughing a sort of frenzy, "you have served me well! Matter and spirit—earth and heaven—have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh."

These exclamations broke Georgiana's sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror which her husband had arranged

for that purpose. A faint smile flitted over her lips when she recognized how barely perceptible was now that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer's face with a trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

"My poor Aylmer!" murmured she.

"Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favored!" exclaimed he. "My peerless bride, it is successful! You are perfect!"

"My poor Aylmer," she repeated, with a more than human tenderness, "you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying!"

Alas! it was too true! The fatal hand had grappled with the mystery of life, and was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame. As the last crimson tint of the birthmark—that sole token of human imperfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight. Then a hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present.

1843, 1846

### Rappaccini's Daughter<sup>1</sup>

A young man, named Giovanni Guasconti, came, very long ago, from the more southern region of Italy, to pursue his studies at the

1. It may be part of the perennial charm of this allegorical tale that there has been no general agreement as to its interpretation. In "Rappaccini's Daughter," the symbols and elements are complex, and seem at first to be contradictory. One notes the theme of intellectual arrogance again, in the figures of Rappaccini and Baglioni, reminiscent of such stories as "The Birthmark" and "Ethan Brand." As the consequence of Rappaccini's arrogance, there is the "awful doom" of Beatrice—she is isolated from her own kind, just as Young Goodman Brown and Parson Hooper were,

for their various mistakes. At the same time, one notes in the love story of Giovanni and Beatrice that Giovanni first saw the garden as an "Eden of poisonous flowers," replete with its "Adam," its particular "tree" (Beatrice's), and its reptile. Thus it forms an association with Hawthorne's attack on the puritanical concept of original depravity in *The Scarlet Letter*. "Rappaccini's Daughter" was first published in the *Democratic Review* for December, 1844, and was collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846).

University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his *Inferno*. These reminiscences and associations, together with the tendency to heartbreak natural to a young man for the first time out of his native sphere, caused Giovanni to sigh heavily as he looked around the desolate and ill-furnished apartment.

"Holy Virgin, signor!" cried old Dame Lisabetta, who, won by the youth's remarkable beauty of person, was kindly endeavoring to give the chamber a habitable air, "what a sigh was that to come out of a young man's heart! Do you find this old mansion gloomy? For the love of Heaven, then, put your head out of the window, and you will see as bright sunshine as you have left in Naples."

Guasconti mechanically did as the old woman advised, but could not quite agree with her that the Paduan sunshine was as cheerful as that of southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window and expended its fostering influences on a variety of plants, which seemed to have been cultivated with exceeding care.

"Does this garden belong to the house?" asked Giovanni.

"Heaven forbid, signor, unless it were fruitful of better pot herbs than any that grow there now," answered old Lisabetta. "No; that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous doctor, who, I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said that he distils these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm. Oftentimes you may see the signor doctor at work, and perchance the signora, his daughter, too, gathering the strange flowers that grow in the garden."

The old woman had now done what she could for the aspect of the chamber; and, commending the young man to the protection of the saints, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance, he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure-place of an opulent family; for there was the ruin of a marble fountain, in the centre, sculptured with rare art, but so wofully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos of remaining fragments. The water, however, continued to gush and sparkle into the sunbeams

as cheerfully as ever. A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man's window, and made him feel as if the fountain were an immortal spirit that sung its song unceasingly and without heeding the vicissitudes around it, while one century imbedded it in marble and another scattered the perishable garniture on the soil. All about the pool into which the water subsided grew various plants, that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and, in some instances, flowers gorgeously magnificent. There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care, as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fostered them. Some were placed in urns, rich with old carving, and others in common garden pots; some crept serpent-like along the ground or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. One plant had wreathed itself round a statue of Vertumnus,<sup>2</sup> which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage, so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study.

While Giovanni stood at the window he heard a rustling behind a screen of leaves, and became aware that a person was at work in the garden. His figure soon emerged into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer, but a tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin, gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path: it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume. Nevertheless, in spite of this deep intelligence on his part, there was no approach to intimacy between himself and these vegetable existences. On the contrary, he avoided their actual touch or the direct inhaling of their odors with a caution that impressed Giovanni most disagreeably; for the man's demeanor was that of one walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts, or deadly snakes, or evil spirits,

2. Roman deity of the gardens and orchards, who presided over the change of seasons.

which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him some terrible fatality. It was strangely frightful to the young man's imagination to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world? And this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow,—was he the Adam?

The distrustful gardener, while plucking away the dead leaves or pruning the too luxuriant growth of the shrubs, defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were these his only armor. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple gems beside the marble fountain, he placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a deadlier malice; but, finding his task still too dangerous, he drew back, removed the mask, and called loudly, but in the infirm voice of a person affected with inward disease,—

“Beatrice! Beatrice!”

“Here am I, my father. What would you?” cried a rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house—a voice as rich as a tropical sunset, and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson and of perfumes heavily delectable. “Are you in the garden?”

“Yes, Beatrice,” answered the gardener, “and I need your help.”

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely, in their luxuriance, by her virgin zone.<sup>3</sup> Yet Giovanni's fancy must have grown morbid while he looked down into the garden; for the impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if here were another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones, as beautiful as they, more beautiful than the richest of them, but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. As Beatrice came down the garden path, it was observable that she handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants which her father had most sedulously avoided.

“Here, Beatrice,” said the latter, “see how many needful offices require to be done to our chief treasure. Yet, shattered as I am, my life might pay the penalty of approaching it so closely as circumstances demand. Henceforth, I fear, this plant must be consigned

3. Originally, a belt or girdle. In Mediterranean countries, unmarried women wore a distinctive variety of belt, hence a “virgin zone.”

to your sole charge."

"And gladly will I undertake it," cried again the rich tones of the young lady, as she bent towards the magnificent plant and opened her arms as if to embrace it. "Yes, my sister, my splendor, it shall be Beatrice's task to nurse and serve thee; and thou shalt reward her with thy kisses and perfumed breath, which to her is as the breath of life."

Then, with all the tenderness in her manner that was so strikingly expressed in her words, she busied herself with such attentions as the plant seemed to require; and Giovanni, at his lofty window, rubbed his eyes and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower, or one sister performing the duties of affection to another. The scene soon terminated. Whether Dr. Rappaccini had finished his labors in the garden, or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger's face, he now took his daughter's arm and retired. Night was already closing in; oppressive exhalations seemed to proceed from the plants and steal upward past the open window; and Giovanni, closing the lattice, went to his couch and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni's first movement, on starting from sleep, was to throw open the window and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised and a little ashamed to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun which gilded the dew-drops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. The young man rejoiced that, in the heart of the barren city, he had the privilege of overlooking this spot of lovely and luxuriant vegetation. It would serve, he said to himself, as a symbolic language to keep him in communion with Nature. Neither the sickly and thoughtworn Dr. Giacomo Rappaccini, it is true, nor his brilliant daughter, were now visible; so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both was due to their own qualities and how much to his wonder-working fancy; but he was inclined to take a most rational view of the whole matter.

In the course of the day he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, professor of medicine in the university, a physician of eminent repute, to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The professor was an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature, and habits that might almost be called jovial. He kept the young man

to dinner, and made himself very agreeable by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a flask or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, conceiving that men of science, inhabitants of the same city, must needs be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Dr. Rappaccini. But the professor did not respond with so much cordiality as he had anticipated.

"Ill would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine," said Professor Pietro Baglioni, in answer to a question of Giovanni, "to withhold due and well-considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini; but, on the other hand, I should answer it but scantily to my conscience were I to permit a worthy youth like yourself, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to imbibe erroneous ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Dr. Rappaccini has as much science as any member of the faculty—with perhaps one single exception—in Padua, or all Italy; but there are certain grave objections to his professional character."

"And what are they?" asked the young man.

"Has my friend Giovanni any disease of body or heart, that he is so inquisitive about physicians?" said the professor, with a smile. "But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge."

"Methinks he is an awful man indeed," remarked Guasconti, mentally recalling the cold and purely intellectual aspect of Rappaccini. "And yet, worshipful professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men capable of so spiritual a love of science?"

"God forbid," answered the professor, somewhat testily; "at least, unless they take sounder views of the healing art than those adopted by Rappaccini. It is his theory that all medicinal virtues are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons. These he cultivates with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new varieties of poison, more horribly deleterious than Nature, without the assistance of this learned person, would ever have plagued the world withal. That the signor doctor does less mischief than might be expected with such dangerous substances is undeniable. Now and then, it must be owned, he has effected, or seemed to effect, a marvellous cure; but, to tell you my private mind, Signor Giovanni, he should receive little credit for such instances of success,—they being probably the work of chance,—but should be held

strictly accountable for his failures, which may justly be considered his own work."

The youth might have taken Baglioni's opinions with many grains of allowance had he known that there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Dr. Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua.

"I know not, most learned professor," returned Giovanni, after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini's exclusive zeal for science,—“I know not how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter."

"Aha!" cried the professor, with a laugh. "So now our friend Giovanni's secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though not half a dozen have ever had the good hap to see her face. I know little of the Signora Beatrice save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that, young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor's chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine! Other absurd rumors there be, not worth talking about or listening to. So now, Signor Giovanni, drink off your glass of lachryma."<sup>4</sup>

Guasconti returned to his lodgings somewhat heated with the wine he had quaffed, and which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Dr. Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a florist's, he bought a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Ascending to his chamber, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the depth of the wall, so that he could look down into the garden with little risk of being discovered. All beneath his eye was a solitude. The strange plants were basking in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another, as if in acknowledgment of sympathy and kindred. In the midst, by the shattered fountain, grew the magnificent shrub, with its purple gems clustering all over it; they glowed in the air, and gleamed back again out of the depths of the pool, which thus seemed to overflow with colored radiance from the rich reflection that was steeped in it. At first, as we have said, the garden was a solitude. Soon, however,—as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared, would be the case,—a figure appeared beneath the antique sculptured portal, and came down between the rows of plants, inhaling their various perfumes as if she were one of those beings of old classic fable that lived upon sweet

4. In full, *Lachryma Christi* (tears of Christ), an esteemed Italian wine from the Neapolitan area.



odors. On again beholding Beatrice, the young man was even startled to perceive how much her beauty exceeded his recollection of it; so brilliant, so vivid, was its character, that she glowed amid the sunlight, and, as Giovanni whispered to himself, positively illuminated the more shadowy intervals of the garden path. Her face being now more revealed than on the former occasion, he was struck by its expression of simplicity and sweetness,—qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character, and which made him ask anew what manner of mortal she might be. Nor did he fail again to observe, or imagine, an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gemlike flowers over the fountain,—a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues.

Approaching the shrub, she threw open her arms, as with a passionate ardor, and drew its branches into an intimate embrace—so intimate that her features were hidden in its leafy bosom and her glistening ringlets all intermingled with the flowers.

“Give me thy breath, my sister,” exclaimed Beatrice; “for I am faint with common air. And give me this flower of thine, which I separate with gentlest fingers from the stem and place it close beside my heart.”

With these words the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini plucked one of the richest blossoms of the shrub, and was about to fasten it in her bosom. But now, unless Giovanni's draughts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred. A small orange-colored reptile, of the lizard or chameleon species, chanced to be creeping along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni,—but, at the distance from which he gazed, he could scarcely have seen anything so minute,—it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine.<sup>5</sup> Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom. There it blushed, and almost glimmered with the dazzling effect of a precious stone, adding to her dress and aspect the one appropriate charm which nothing else in the world could have supplied. But Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled.

“Am I awake? Have I my senses?” said he to himself. “What is

5. The presence of the reptile in the garden reminds the reader that Giovanni's first sight of the place had suggested a Garden of Eden of which the Adam was

Rappaccini. But here the reptile is a harmless lizard, and the fruit of Beatrice's particular “tree” has killed it.

this being? Beautiful shall I call her, or inexpressibly terrible?"

Beatrice now strayed carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni's window, so that he was compelled to thrust his head quite out of its concealment in order to gratify the intense and painful curiosity which she excited. At this moment there came a beautiful insect over the garden wall; it had, perhaps, wandered through the city, and found no flowers or verdure among those antique haunts of men until the heavy perfumes of Dr. Rappaccini's shrubs had lured it from afar. Without alighting on the flowers, this winged brightness seemed to be attracted by Beatrice, and lingered in the air and fluttered about her head. Now, here it could not be but that Giovanni Guasconti's eyes deceived him. Be that as it might, he fancied that, while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight, it grew faint and fell at her feet; its bright wings shivered; it was dead—from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself and sighed heavily as she bent over the dead insect.

An impulsive movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the young man—rather a Grecian than an Italian head, with fair, regular features, and a glistening of gold among his ringlets—gazing down upon her like a being that hovered in mid air. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the bouquet which he had hitherto held in his hand.

"Signora," said he, "there are pure and healthful flowers. Wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti."

"Thanks, signor," replied Beatrice, with her rich voice, that came forth as it were like a gush of music, and with a mirthful expression half childish and half woman-like. "I accept your gift, and would fain recompense it with this precious purple flower; but if I toss it into the air it will not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must even content himself with my thanks."

She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then, as if inwardly ashamed at having stepped aside from her maidenly reserve to respond to a stranger's greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni, when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought; there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance.

For many days after this incident the young man avoided the window that looked into Dr. Rappaccini's garden, as if something ugly and monstrous would have blasted his eyesight had he been betrayed into a glance. He felt conscious of having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power by the

communication which he had opened with Beatrice. The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, to quit his lodgings and Padua itself at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself, as far as possible, to the familiar and daylight view of Beatrice—thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience. Least of all, while avoiding her sight, ought Giovanni to have remained so near this extraordinary being that the proximity and possibility even of intercourse should give a kind of substance and reality to the wild vagaries which his imagination ran riot continually in producing. Guasconti had not a deep heart—or, at all events, its depths were not sounded now; but he had a quick fancy, and an ardent southern temperament, which rose every instant to a higher fever pitch. Whether or no Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes, that fatal breath, the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.

Sometimes he endeavored to assuage the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua or beyond its gates: his footsteps kept time with the throbbings of his brain, so that the walk was apt to accelerate itself to a race. One day he found himself arrested; his arm was seized by a portly personage, who had turned back on recognizing the young man and expended much breath in overtaking him.

"Signor Giovanni! Stay, my young friend!" cried he. "Have you forgotten me? That might well be the case if I were as much altered as yourself."

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided ever since their first meeting, from a doubt that the professor's sagacity would look too deeply into his secrets. Endeavoring to recover himself, he stared forth wildly from his inner world into the outer one and spoke like a man in a dream.

"Yes; I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Professor Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass!"

"Not yet, not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti," said the professor,

smiling, but at the same time scrutinizing the youth with an earnest glance. "What! did I grow up side by side with your father? and shall his son pass me like a stranger in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni; for we must have a word or two before we part."

"Speedily, then, most worshipful professor, speedily," said Giovanni, with feverish impatience. "Does not your worship see that I am in haste?"

Now, while he was speaking there came a man in black along the street, stooping and moving feebly like a person in inferior health. His face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect that an observer might easily have overlooked the merely physical attributes and have seen only this wonderful energy. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant salutation with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni with an intentness that seemed to bring out whatever was within him worthy of notice. Nevertheless, there was a peculiar quietness in the look, as if taking merely a speculative, not a human, interest in the young man.

"It is Dr. Rappaccini!" whispered the professor when the stranger had passed. "Has he ever seen your face before?"

"Not that I know," answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

"He *has* seen you! he must have seen you!" said Baglioni, hastily. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! It is the same that coldly illuminates his face as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment, he has killed by the perfume of a flower; a look as deep as Nature itself, but without Nature's warmth of love. Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiments!"

"Will you make a fool of me?" cried Giovanni, passionately. "*That*, signor professor, were an untoward experiment."

"Patience! patience!" replied the imperturbable professor. "I tell thee, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in thee. Thou hast fallen into fearful hands! And the Signora Beatrice,—what part does she act in this mystery?"

But Guasconti, finding Baglioni's pertinacity intolerable, here broke away, and was gone before the professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man intently and shook his head.

"This must not be," said Baglioni to himself. "The youth is the son of my old friend, and shall not come to any harm from which the arcana of medical science can preserve him. Besides, it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini, thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to.

Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!"

Meanwhile Giovanni had pursued a circuitous route, and at length found himself at the door of his lodgings. As he crossed the threshold he was met by old Lisabetta, who smirked and smiled, and was evidently desirous to attract his attention; vainly, however, as the ebullition of his feelings had momentarily subsided into a cold and dull vacuity. He turned his eyes full upon the withered face that was puckering itself into a smile, but seemed to behold it not. The old dame, therefore, laid her grasp upon his cloak.

"Signor! signor!" whispered she, still with a smile over the whole breadth of her visage, so that it looked not unlike a grotesque carving in wood, darkened by centuries. "Listen, signor! There is a private entrance into the garden!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about, as if an inanimate thing should start into feverish life. "A private entrance into Dr. Rappaccini's garden?"

"Hush! hush! not so loud!" whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth. "Yes; into the worshipful doctor's garden, where you may see all his fine shrubbery. Many a young man in Padua would give gold to be admitted among those flowers."

Giovanni put a piece of gold into her hand.

"Show me the way," said he.

A surmise, probably excited by his conversation with Baglioni, crossed his mind, that this interposition of old Lisabetta might perchance be connected with the intrigue, whatever were its nature, in which the professor seemed to suppose that Dr. Rappaccini was involving him. But such a suspicion, though it disturbed Giovanni, was inadequate to restrain him. The instant that he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed an absolute necessity of his existence to do so. It mattered not whether she were angel or demon; he was irrevocably within her sphere, and must obey the law that whirled him onward, in ever-lessening circles, towards a result which he did not attempt to foreshadow; and yet, strange to say, there came across him a sudden doubt whether this intense interest on his part were not delusory; whether it were really of so deep and positive a nature as to justify him in now thrusting himself into an incalculable position; whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain, only slightly or not at all connected with his heart.

He paused, hesitated, turned half about, but again went on. His withered guide led him along several obscure passages, and finally undid a door, through which, as it was opened, there came the sight and sound of rustling leaves, with the broken sunshine glimmering among them. Giovanni stepped forth, and, forcing himself through

the entanglement of a shrub that wreathed its tendrils over the hidden entrance, stood beneath his own window in the open area of Dr. Rappaccini's garden.

How often is it the case that, when impossibilities have come to pass and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm, and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus. Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance. So was it now with Giovanni. Day after day his pulses had throbbed with feverish blood at the improbable idea of an interview with Beatrice, and of standing with her, face to face, in this very garden, basking in the Oriental sunshine of her beauty, and snatching from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed the riddle of his own existence. But now there was a singular and untimely equanimity within his breast. He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her father were present, and, perceiving that he was alone, began a critical observation of the plants.

The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him; their gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural. There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer, straying by himself through a forest, would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket. Several also would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness indicating that there had been such commixture, and, as it were, adultery, of various vegetable species, that the production was no longer of God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty. They were probably the result of experiment, which in one or two cases had succeeded in mingling plants individually lovely into a compound possessing the questionable and ominous character that distinguished the whole growth of the garden. In fine, Giovanni recognized but two or three plants in the collection, and those of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these contemplations he heard the rustling of a silken garment, and, turning, beheld Beatrice emerging from beneath the sculptured portal.

Giovanni had not considered with himself what should be his deportment; whether he should apologize for his intrusion into the garden, or assume that he was there with the privy at least, if not by the desire, of Dr. Rappaccini or his daughter; but Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease, though leaving him still in doubt by what agency he had gained admittance. She came lightly along the path and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure.

"You are a connoisseur in flowers, signor," said Beatrice, with a smile, alluding to the bouquet which he had flung her from the window. "It is no marvel, therefore, if the sight of my father's rare collection has tempted you to take a nearer view. If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these shrubs; for he has spent a lifetime in such studies, and this garden is his world."

"And yourself, lady," observed Giovanni, "if fame says true,—you likewise are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms and these spicy perfumes. Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than if taught by Signor Rappaccini himself."

"Are there such idle rumors?" asked Beatrice, with the music of a pleasant laugh. "Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? What a jest is there! No; though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their hues and perfume; and sometimes methinks I would fain rid myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here, and those not the least brilliant, that shock and offend me when they meet my eye. But pray, signor, do not believe these stories about my science. Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes."

"And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?" asked Giovanni, pointedly, while the recollection of former scenes made him shrink. "No, signora; you demand too little of me. Bid me believe nothing save what comes from your own lips."

It would appear that Beatrice understood him. There came a deep flush to her cheek; but she looked full into Giovanni's eyes, and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queenlike haughtiness.

"I do so bid you, signor," she replied. "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence; but the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe."

A fervor glowed in her whole aspect and beamed upon Giovanni's consciousness like the light of truth itself; but while she spoke there was a fragrance in the atmosphere around her, rich and delightful, though evanescent, yet which the young man, from an indefinable reluctance, scarcely dared to draw into his lungs. It might be the odor of the flowers. Could it be Beatrice's breath which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart? A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni and flitted away; he seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl's eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear.

The tinge of passion that had colored Beatrice's manner vanished;

she became gay, and appeared to derive a pure delight from her communion with the youth not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt conversing with a voyager from the civilized world. Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight or summer clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city, or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters—questions indicating such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms, that Giovanni responded as if to an infant. Her spirit gushed out before him like a fresh rill that was just catching its first glimpse of the sunlight and wondering at the reflections of earth and sky which were flung into its bosom. There came thoughts, too, from a deep source, and fantasies of a gemlike brilliancy, as if diamonds and rubies sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain. Ever and anon there gleamed across the young man's mind a sense of wonder that he should be walking side by side with the being who had so wrought upon his imagination, whom he had idealized in such hues of terror, in whom he had positively witnessed such manifestations of dreadful attributes,—that he should be conversing with Beatrice like a brother, and should find her so human and so maidenlike. But such reflections were only momentary; the effect of her character was too real not to make itself familiar at once.

In this free intercourse they had strayed through the garden, and now, after many turns among its avenues, were come to the shattered fountain, beside which grew the magnificent shrub, with its treasury of glowing blossoms. A fragrance was diffused from it which Giovanni recognized as identical with that which he had attributed to Beatrice's breath, but incomparably more powerful. As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her bosom as if her heart were throbbing suddenly and painfully.

"For the first time in my life," murmured she, addressing the shrub, "I had forgotten thee."

"I remember, signora," said Giovanni, "that you once promised to reward me with one of these living gems for the bouquet which I had the happy boldness to fling to your feet. Permit me now to pluck it as a memorial of this interview."

He made a step towards the shrub with extended hand; but Beatrice darted forward, uttering a shriek that went through his heart like a dagger. She caught his hand and drew it back with the whole force of her slender figure. Giovanni felt her touch thrilling through his fibres.

"Touch it not!" exclaimed she, in a voice of agony. "Not for thy life! It is fatal!"

Then, hiding her face, she fled from him and vanished beneath



the sculptured portal. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes, he beheld the emaciated figure and pale intelligence of Dr. Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his chamber than the image of Beatrice came back to his passionate musings, invested with all the witchery that had been gathering around it ever since his first glimpse of her, and now likewise imbued with a tender warmth of girlish womanhood. She was human; her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love. Those tokens which he had hitherto considered as proofs of a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system were now either forgotten, or, by the subtle sophistry of passion transmitted into a golden crown of enchantment, rendering Beatrice the more admirable by so much as she was the more unique. Whatever had looked ugly was now beautiful; or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half ideas which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness. Thus did he spend the night, nor fell asleep until the dawn had begun to awake the slumbering flowers in Dr. Rappaccini's garden, whither Giovanni's dreams doubtless led him. Up rose the sun in his due season, and, flinging his beams upon the young man's eyelids, awoke him to a sense of pain. When thoroughly aroused, he became sensible of a burning and tingling agony in his hand—in his right hand—the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own when he was on the point of plucking one of the gemlike flowers. On the back of that hand there was now a purple print like that of four small fingers, and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist.

Oh, how stubbornly does love,—or even that cunning semblance of love which flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart,—how stubbornly does it hold its faith until the moment comes when it is doomed to vanish into thin mist! Giovanni wrapped a handkerchief about his hand and wondered what evil thing had stung him, and soon forgot his pain in a reverie of Beatrice.

After the first interview, a second was in the inevitable course of what we call fate. A third; a fourth; and a meeting with Beatrice in the garden was no longer an incident in Giovanni's daily life, but the whole space in which he might be said to live; for the anticipation and memory of that ecstatic hour made up the remainder. Nor was it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth's appearance, and flew to his side with confidence as unreserved as if they had been playmates from early infancy—as if they were such playmates still. If, by any unwonted chance, he failed to come at the appointed moment, she stood beneath the window and sent

up the rich sweetness of her tones to float around him in his chamber and echo and reverberate throughout his heart: "Giovanni! Giovanni! Why tarriest thou? Come down!" And down he hastened into that Eden of poisonous flowers.

But, with all this intimate familiarity, there was still a reserve in Beatrice's demeanor, so rigidly and invariably sustained that the idea of infringing it scarcely occurred to his imagination. By all appreciable signs, they loved; they had looked love with eyes that conveyed the holy secret from the depths of one soul into the depths of the other, as if it were too sacred to be whispered by the way; they had even spoken love in those gushes of passion when their spirits darted forth in articulated breath like tongues of long-hidden flame; and yet there had been no seal of lips, no clasp of hands, nor any slightest caress such as love claims and hallows. He had never touched one of the gleaming ringlets of her hair; her garment—so marked was the physical barrier between them—had never been waved against him by a breeze. On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him. At such times he was startled at the horrible suspicions that rose, monster-like, out of the caverns of his heart and stared him in the face; his love grew thin and faint as the morning mist, his doubts alone had substance. But, when Beatrice's face brightened again after the momentary shadow, she was transformed at once from the mysterious, questionable being whom he had watched with so much awe and horror; she was now the beautiful and unsophisticated girl whom he felt his spirit knew with a certainty beyond all other knowledge.

A considerable time had now passed since Giovanni's last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was disagreeably surprised by a visit from the professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. Given up as he had long been to a pervading excitement, he could tolerate no companions except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling. Such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor chatted carelessly for a few moments about the gossip of the city and the university, and then took up another topic.

"I have been reading an old classic author lately," said he, "and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it.<sup>6</sup> It is of an Indian prince, who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was as lovely as the dawn and gorgous as the sunset; but what especially distinguished her

6. Baglioni's story finds its source in a passage copied by Hawthorne, in his *American Notebooks*, from Sir Thomas

Browne's *Vulgar Errors* (1646), Book VII, Caption 17.

was a certain rich perfume in her breath—richer than a garden of Persian roses. Alexander, as was natural to a youthful conqueror, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger; but a certain sage physician, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in regard to her.”

“And what was that?” asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the professor.

“That this lovely woman,” continued Baglioni, with emphasis, “had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was so imbued with them that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath she blasted the very air. Her love would have been poison—her embrace death. Is not this a marvellous tale?”

“A childish fable,” answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. “I marvel how your worship finds time to read such nonsense among your graver studies.”

“By the by,” said the professor, looking uneasily about him, “what singular fragrance is this in your apartment? Is it the perfume of your gloves? It is faint, but delicious; and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, methinks it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower; but I see no flowers in the chamber.

“Nor are there any,” replied Giovanni, who had turned pale as the professor spoke; “nor, I think, is there any fragrance except in your worship’s imagination. Odors, being a sort of element combined of the sensual and the spiritual, are apt to deceive us in this manner. The recollection of a perfume, the bare idea of it, may easily be mistaken for a present reality.”

“Ay; but my sober imagination does not often play such tricks,” said Baglioni; “and, were I to fancy any kind of odor, it would be that of some vile apothecary drug, wherewith my fingers are likely enough to be imbued. Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, tinctures his medicaments with odors richer than those of Araby. Doubtless, likewise, the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would minister to her patients with draughts as sweet as a maiden’s breath; but woe to him that sips them!”

Giovanni’s face evinced many contending emotions. The tone in which the professor alluded to the pure and lovely daughter of Rappaccini was a torture to his soul; and yet the intimation of a view of her character, opposite to his own, gave instantaneous distinctness to a thousand dim suspicions, which now grinned at him like so many demons. But he strove hard to quell them and to respond to Baglioni with a true lover’s perfect faith.

“Signor professor,” said he, “you were my father’s friend; perchance, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part towards his son.

I would fain feel nothing towards you save respect and deference; but I pray you to observe, signor, that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You know not the Signora Beatrice. You cannot, therefore, estimate the wrong—the blasphemy, I may even say—that is offered to her character by a light or injurious word.”

“Giovanni! my poor Giovanni!” answered the professor, with a calm expression of pity, “I know this wretched girl far better than yourself. You shall hear the truth in respect to the poisoner Rappaccini and his poisonous daughter; yes, poisonous as she is beautiful. Listen; for, even should you do violence to my gray hairs, it shall not silence me. That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini and in the person of the lovely Beatrice.”

Giovanni groaned and hid his face.

“Her father,” continued Baglioni, “was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child in this horrible manner as the victim of his insane zeal for science; for, let us do him justice, he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt you are selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the result is to be death; perhaps a fate more awful still. Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing.”

“It is a dream,” muttered Giovanni to himself; “surely it is a dream.”

“But,” resumed the professor, “be of good cheer, son of my friend. It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father’s madness has estranged her. Behold this little silver vase! It was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini,<sup>7</sup> and is well worthy to be a love gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have rendered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias<sup>8</sup> innocuous. Doubt not that it will be as efficacious against those of Rappaccini. Bestow the vase, and the precious liquid within it, on your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result.”

Baglioni laid a small, exquisitely wrought silver vial on the table and withdrew, leaving what he had said to produce its effect upon the young man’s mind.

“We will thwart Rappaccini yet,” thought he, chuckling to himself, as he descended the stairs; “but, let us confess the truth of him, he is a wonderful man—a wonderful man indeed; a vile empiric, however, in his practice, and therefore not to be tolerated by those

7. Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), famous Italian sculptor, and perhaps the greatest goldsmith of the Renaissance.

8. Italian family influential in the papacy and politics (1455–1519), charged with the poisoning of numerous enemies.

who respect the good old rules of the medical profession."

Throughout Giovanni's whole acquaintance with Beatrice, he had occasionally, as we have said, been haunted by dark surmises as to her character; yet so thoroughly had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, most affectionate, and guileless creature, that the image now held up by Professor Baglioni looked as strange and incredible as if it were not in accordance with his own original conception. True, there were ugly recollections connected with his first glimpses of the beautiful girl; he could not quite forget the bouquet that withered in her grasp, and the insect that perished amid the sunny air, by no ostensible agency save the fragrance of her breath. These incidents, however, dissolving in the pure light of her character, had no longer the efficacy of facts, but were acknowledged as mistaken fantasies, by whatever testimony of the senses they might appear to be substantiated. There is something truer and more real than what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger. On such better evidence had Giovanni founded his confidence in Beatrice, though rather by the necessary force of her high attributes than by any deep and generous faith on his part. But now his spirit was incapable of sustaining itself at the height to which the early enthusiasm of passion had exalted it; he fell down, grovelling among earthly doubts, and defiled therewith the pure whiteness of Beatrice's image. Not that he gave her up; he did but distrust. He resolved to institute some decisive test that should satisfy him, once for all, whether there were those dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature which could not be supposed to exist without some corresponding monstrosity of soul. His eyes, gazing down afar, might have deceived him as to the lizard, the insect, and the flowers; but if he could witness, at the distance of a few paces, the sudden blight of one fresh and healthful flower in Beatrice's hand, there would be room for no further question. With this idea he hastened to the florist's and purchased a bouquet that was still gemmed with the morning dew-drops.

It was now the customary hour of his daily interview with Beatrice. Before descending into the garden, Giovanni failed not to look at his figure in the mirror,—a vanity to be expected in a beautiful young man, yet, as displaying itself at that troubled and feverish moment, the token of a certain shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character. He did gaze, however, and said to himself that his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life.

"At least," thought he, "her poison has not yet insinuated itself into my system. I am no flower to perish in her grasp."

With that thought he turned his eyes on the bouquet, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A thrill of indefinable horror shot through his frame on perceiving that those dewy flowers were

already beginning to droop; they wore the aspect of things that had been fresh and lovely yesterday. Giovanni grew white as marble, and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there as at the likeness of something frightful. He remembered Baglioni's remark about the fragrance that seemed to pervade the chamber. It must have been the poison in his breath! Then he shuddered—shuddered at himself. Recovering from his stupor, he began to watch with curious eye a spider that was busily at work hanging its web from the antique cornice of the apartment, crossing and recrossing the artful system of interwoven lines—as vigorous and active a spider as ever dangled from an old ceiling. Giovanni bent towards the insect, and emitted a deep, long breath. The spider suddenly ceased its toil; the web vibrated with a tremor originating in the body of the small artisan. Again Giovanni sent forth a breath, deeper, longer, and imbued with a venomous feeling out of his heart: he knew not whether he were wicked, or only desperate. The spider made a convulsive gripe with his limbs and hung dead across the window.

"Accursed! accursed!" muttered Giovanni, addressing himself. "Hast thou grown so poisonous that this deadly insect perishes by thy breath?"

At that moment a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden.

"Giovanni! Giovanni! It is past the hour! Why tarriest thou? Come down!"

"Yes," muttered Giovanni again. "She is the only being whom my breath may not slay! Would that it might!"

He rushed down, and in an instant was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance; but with her actual presence there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off: recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm; recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unscaled from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic. Giovanni's rage was quelled into an aspect of sullen insensibility. Beatrice, with a quick spiritual sense, immediately felt that there was a gulf of blackness between them which neither he nor she could pass. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the marble fountain and to its pool

of water on the ground, in the midst of which grew the shrub that bore gem-like blossoms. Giovanni was affrighted at the eager enjoyment—the appetite, as it were—with which he found himself inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

“Beatrice,” asked he, abruptly, “whence came this shrub?”

“My father created it,” answered she, with simplicity.

“Created it! created it!” repeated Giovanni. “What mean you, Beatrice?”

“He is a man fearfully acquainted with the secrets of Nature,” replied Beatrice; “and, at the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. Approach it not!” continued she, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the shrub. “It has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni,—I grew up and blossomed with the plant and was nourished with its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with a human affection; for, alas!—hast thou not suspected it?—there was an awful doom.”

Here Giovanni frowned so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her, and made her blush that she had doubted for an instant.

“There was an awful doom,” she continued, “the effect of my father’s fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent thee, dearest Giovanni, oh, how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!”

“Was it a hard doom?” asked Giovanni, fixing his eyes upon her.

“Only of late have I known how hard it was,” answered she, tenderly. “Oh, yes; but my heart was torpid, and therefore quiet.”

Giovanni’s rage broke forth from his sullen gloom like a lightning flash out of a dark cloud.

“Accursed one!” cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. “And, finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me likewise from all the warmth of life and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!”

“Giovanni!” exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind; she was merely thunderstruck.

“Yes, poisonous thing!” repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. “Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world’s wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now, if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to all others, let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred, and so die!”

“What has befallen me?” murmured Beatrice, with a low moan

out of her heart. "Holy Virgin, pity me, a poor heartbroken child!"

"Thou,—dost thou pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the same fiendish scorn. "Thy very prayers, as they come from thy lips, taint the atmosphere with death. Yes, yes; let us pray! Let us to church and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal! They that come after us will perish as by a pestilence! Let us sign crosses in the air! It will be scattering curses abroad in the likeness of holy symbols!"

"Giovanni," said Beatrice, calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "why dost thou join thyself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me. But thou,—what hast thou to do, save with one other shudder at my hideous misery to go forth out of the garden and mingle with thy race, and forget that there ever crawled on earth such a monster as poor Beatrice?"

"Dost thou pretend ignorance?" asked Giovanni, scowling upon her. "Behold! this power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini."

There was a swarm of summer insects flitting through the air in search of the food promised by the flower odors of the fatal garden. They circled round Giovanni's head, and were evidently attracted towards him by the same influence which had drawn them for an instant within the sphere of several of the shrubs. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice as at least a score of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" shrieked Beatrice. "It is my father's fatal science! No, no, Giovanni; it was not I! Never! never! I dreamed only to love thee and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart; for, Giovanni, believe it, though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and craves love as its daily food. But my father,—he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes; spurn me, tread upon me, kill me! Oh, what is death after such words as thine? But it was not I. Not for a world of bliss would I have done it."

Giovanni's passion had exhausted itself in its outburst from his lips. There now came across him a sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair closer together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them? Besides, thought Giovanni, might there not still be a hope of his returning within the limits of ordinary nature, and leading Beatrice, the redeemed Beatrice, by the hand? O, weak, and selfish, and unworthy spirit, that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible.



after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice's love by Giovanni's blighting words! No, no; there could be no such hope. She must pass heavily, with that broken heart, across the borders of Time—she must bathe her hurts in some fount of paradise, and forget her grief in the light of immortality, and *there* be well.

But Giovanni did not know it.

"Dear Beatrice," said he, approaching her, while she shrank away as always at his approach, but now with a different impulse, "dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet so desperate. Behold! there is a medicine, potent, as a wise physician has assured me, and almost divine in its efficacy. It is composed of ingredients the most opposite to those by which thy awful father has brought this calamity upon thee and me. It is distilled of blessed herbs. Shall we not quaff it together, and thus be purified from evil?"

"Give it me!" said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver vial which Giovanni took from his bosom. She added, with a peculiar emphasis, "I will drink; but do thou await the result."

She put Baghoni's antidote to her lips; and, at the same moment, the figure of Rappaccini emerged from the portal and came slowly towards the marble fountain. As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture or a group of statuary and finally be satisfied with his success. He paused; his bent form grew erect with conscious power; he spread out his hands over them in the attitude of a father imploring a blessing upon his children; but those were the same hands that had thrown poison into the stream of their lives. Giovanni trembled. Beatrice shuddered nervously, and pressed her hand upon her heart.

"My daughter," said Rappaccini, "thou art no longer lonely in the world. Pluck one of those precious gems from thy sister shrub and bid thy bridegroom wear it in his bosom. It will not harm him now. My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, through the world, most dear to one another and dreadful to all besides!"

"My father," said Beatrice, feebly,—and still as she spoke she kept her hand upon her heart,—“wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?”

"Miserable!" exclaimed Rappaccini. "What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvellous gifts against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy—misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath—misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred

the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?"

"I would fain have been loved, not feared," murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. "But now it matters not. I am going, father, where the evil which thou hast striven to mingle with my being will pass away like a dream—like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my heart; but they, too, will fall away as I ascend. Oh, was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?"

To Beatrice,—so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill,—as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death; and thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni. Just at that moment Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunderstricken man of science,—

"Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is *this* the upshot of your experiment!"

1844, 1846

## Ethan Brand<sup>9</sup>

### *A Chapter from an Abortive Romance*

Bartram the lime-burner, a rough, heavy-looking man, begrimed with charcoal, sat watching his kiln, at nightfall, while his little son played at building houses with the scattered fragments of marble, when, on the hillside below them, they heard a roar of laughter, not mirthful, but slow, and even solemn, like a wind shaking the boughs of the forest.

"Father, what is that?" asked the little boy, leaving his play, and pressing betwixt his father's knees.

9. "Ethan Brand" represents the savage culmination of Hawthorne's recurrent theme, the awful consequences of intellectual withdrawal from humanity—the repudiation of involvement with the general heart of man. The germ of the story is found in a memorandum, dated 1844, in *The American Notebooks* (edited by Randall Stewart, p. 106): "The Unpardonable Sin might consist in a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul; in consequence of which, the investigator pried into its dark depths \* \* \* from a cold philosophical curiosity,—content that it should be wicked in whatever kind or degree, and

only desiring to study it out. Would not this, in other words, be the separation of the intellect from the heart?" In the same source (pp. 36–67 *passim*) are detailed descriptions of the principal characters and scenes of this tale, including the lime-kiln; these were written during a holiday that Hawthorne spent near North Adams, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1838. "Ethan Brand" was first published in the *Boston Museum* for January 5, 1850, and was reprinted in the *Dollar Magazine* for May, 1850; it was collected in *The Snow-Image and Other Tales* (London, 1851, Boston, 1852).

"Oh, some drunken man, I suppose," answered the lime-burner; "some merry fellow from the bar-room in the village, who dared not laugh loud enough within doors lest he should blow the roof of the house off. So here he is, shaking his jolly sides at the foot of Graylock."<sup>1</sup>

"But, father," said the child, more sensitive than the obtuse, middle-aged clown, "he does not laugh like a man that is glad. So the noise frightens me!"

"Don't be a fool, child!" cried his father, gruffly. "You will never make a man, I do believe; there is too much of your mother in you. I have known the rustling of a leaf startle you. Hark! Here comes the merry fellow now. You shall see that there is no harm in him."

Bartram and his little son, while they were talking thus, sat watching the same lime-kiln that had been the scene of Ethan Brand's solitary and meditative life, before he began his search for the Unpardonable Sin. Many years, as we have seen, had now elapsed, since that portentous night when the IDEA was first developed.<sup>2</sup> The kiln, however, on the mountain-side, stood unimpaired, and was in nothing changed since he had thrown his dark thoughts into the intense glow of its furnace, and melted them, as it were, into the one thought that took possession of his life. It was a rude, round, tower-like structure about twenty feet high, heavily built of rough stones, and with a hillock of earth heaped about the larger part of its circumference; so that the blocks and fragments of marble might be drawn by cart-loads, and thrown in at the top. There was an opening at the bottom of the tower, like an oven-mouth, but large enough to admit a man in a stooping posture, and provided with a massive iron door. With the smoke and jets of flame issuing from the chinks and crevices of this door, which seemed to give admittance into the hillside, it resembled nothing so much as the private entrance to the infernal regions, which the shepherds of the Delectable Mountains<sup>3</sup> were accustomed to show to pilgrims.

There are many such lime-kilns in that tract of country, for the purpose of burning the white marble which composes a large part of the substance of the hills. Some of them, built years ago, and long deserted, with weeds growing in the vacant round of the interior, which is open to the sky, and grass and wild-flowers rooting themselves into the chinks of the stones, look already like relics of antiquity, and may yet be overspread with the lichens of centuries to come. Others, where the lime-burner still feeds his daily and night-long fire, afford points of interest to the wanderer among the hills,

1. The highest elevation in Massachusetts—Mount Greylock, in the Berkshires.

2. Cf. the subtitle of this story, declaring it to be "A Chapter from an Abortive Romance." Another vestige of the

longer work survives in the reference to "the Esther of our tale," below.

3. A place of temptation for Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (Part II, 1684), which also permitted him to see, in the distance, the Celestial City.

who seats himself on a log of wood or a fragment of marble, to hold a chat with the solitary man. It is a lonesome, and, when the character is inclined to thought, may be an intensely thoughtful occupation; as it proved in the case of Ethan Brand, who had mused to such strange purpose, in days gone by, while the fire in this very kiln was burning.

The man who now watched the fire was of a different order, and troubled himself with no thoughts save the very few that were requisite to his business. At frequent intervals, he flung back the clashing weight of the iron door, and, turning his face from the insufferable glare, thrust in huge logs of oak, or stirred the immense brands with a long pole. Within the furnace were seen the curling and riotous flames, and the burning marble, almost molten with the intensity of heat; while without, the reflection of the fire quivered on the dark intricacy of the surrounding forest, and showed in the foreground a bright and ruddy little picture of the hut, the spring beside its door, the athletic and coal-begrimed figure of the lime-burner, and the half-frightened child, shrinking into the protection of his father's shadow. And when again the iron door was closed, then reappeared the tender light of the half-full moon, which vainly strove to trace out the indistinct shapes of the neighboring mountains; and, in the upper sky, there was a flitting congregation of clouds, still faintly tinged with the rosy sunset, though thus far down into the valley the sunshine had vanished long and long ago.

The little boy now crept still closer to his father, as footsteps were heard ascending the hillside, and a human form thrust aside the bushes that clustered beneath the trees.

"Halloo! who is it?" cried the lime-burner, vexed at his son's timidity, yet half infected by it. "Come forward, and show yourself, like a man, or I'll fling this chunk of marble at your head!"

"You offer me a rough welcome," said a gloomy voice, as the unknown man drew nigh. "Yet I neither claim nor desire a kinder one, even at my own fireside."

To obtain a distincter view, Bartram threw open the iron door of the kiln, whence immediately issued a gush of fierce light, that smote full upon the stranger's face and figure. To a careless eye there appeared nothing very remarkable in his aspect, which was that of a man in a coarse, brown, country-made suit of clothes, tall and thin, with the staff and heavy shoes of a wayfarer. As he advanced, he fixed his eyes—which were very bright—intently upon the brightness of the furnace, as if he beheld, or expected to behold, some object worthy of note within it.

"Good evening, stranger," said the lime-burner; "whence come you, so late in the day?"

"I come from my search," answered the wayfarer; "for, at last, it

is finished."

"Drunk!—or crazy!" muttered Bartram to himself. "I shall have trouble with the fellow. The sooner I drive him away, the better."

The little boy, all in a tremble, whispered to his father, and begged him to shut the door of the kiln, so that there might not be so much light; for that there was something in the man's face which he was afraid to look at, yet could not look away from. And, indeed, even the lime-burner's dull and torpid sense began to be impressed by an indescribable something in that thin, rugged, thoughtful visage, with the grizzled hair hanging wildly about it, and those deeply sunken eyes, which gleamed like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern. But, as he closed the door, the stranger turned towards him, and spoke in a quiet, familiar way, that made Bartram feel as if he were a sane and sensible man, after all.

"Your task draws to an end, I see," said he. "This marble has already been burning three days. A few hours more will convert the stone to lime."

"Why, who are you?" exclaimed the lime-burner. "You seem as well acquainted with my business as I am myself."

"And well I may be," said the stranger: "for I followed the same craft many a long year, and here, too, on this very spot. But you are a new-comer in these parts. Did you never hear of Ethan Brand?"

"The man that went in search of the Unpardonable Sin?" asked Bartram, with a laugh.

"The same," answered the stranger. "He has found what he sought, and therefore he comes back again."

"What! then you are Ethan Brand himself?" cried the lime-burner, in amazement. "I am a new-comer here, as you say, and they call it eighteen years since you left the foot of Graylock. But, I can tell you, the good folks still talk about Ethan Brand, in the village yonder, and what a strange errand took him away from his lime-kiln. Well, and so you have found the Unpardonable Sin?"

"Even so!" said the stranger, calmly.

"If the question is a fair one," proceeded Bartram, "where might it be?"

Ethan Brand laid his finger on his own heart.

"Here!" replied he.

And then, without mirth in his countenance, but as if moved by an involuntary recognition of the infinite absurdity of seeking throughout the world for what was the closest of all things to himself, and looking into every heart, save his own, for what was hidden in no other breast, he broke into a laugh of scorn. It was the same slow, heavy laugh, that had almost appalled the lime-burner when it heralded the wayfarer's approach.

The solitary mountain-side was made dismal by it. Laughter, when

out of place, mistimed, or bursting forth from a disordered state of feeling, may be the most terrible modulation of the human voice. The laughter of one asleep, even if it be a little child,—the madman's laugh,—the wild, screaming laugh of a born idiot,—are sounds that we sometimes tremble to hear, and would always willingly forget. Poets have imagined no utterance of fiends or hobgoblins so fearfully appropriate as a laugh. And even the obtuse lime-burner felt his nerves shaken, as this strange man looked inward at his own heart, and burst into laughter that rolled away into the night, and was indistinctly reverberated among the hills.

"Joc," said he to his little son, "scamper down to the tavern in the village, and tell the jolly fellows there that Ethan Brand has come back, and that he has found the Unpardonable Sin!"

The boy darted away on his errand, to which Ethan Brand made no objection, nor seemed hardly to notice it. He sat on a log of wood, looking steadfastly at the iron door of the kiln. When the child was out of sight, and his swift and light footsteps ceased to be heard treading first on the fallen leaves and then on the rocky mountain-path, the lime-burner began to regret his departure. He felt that the little fellow's presence had been a barrier between his guest and himself, and that he must now deal, heart to heart, with a man who, on his own confession, had committed the one only crime for which Heaven could afford no mercy. That crime, in its indistinct blackness, seemed to overshadow him. The lime-burner's own sins rose up within him, and made his memory riotous with a throng of evil shapes that asserted their kindred with the Master Sin, whatever it might be, which it was within the scope of man's corrupted nature to conceive and cherish. They were all of one family; they went to and fro between his breast and Ethan Brand's, and carried dark greetings from one to the other.

Then Bartram remembered the stories which had grown traditional in reference to this strange man, who had come upon him like a shadow of the night, and was making himself at home in his old place, after so long absence that the dead people, dead and buried for years, would have had more right to be at home, in any familiar spot, than he. Ethan Brand, it was said, had conversed with Satan himself in the lurid blaze of this very kiln. The legend had been matter of mirth heretofore, but looked grisly now. According to this tale, before Ethan Brand departed on his search, he had been accustomed to evoke a fiend from the hot furnace of the lime-kiln, night after night, in order to confer with him about the Unpardonable Sin; the man and the fiend each laboring to frame the image of some mode of guilt which could neither be atoned for nor forgiven. And, with the first gleam of light upon the mountaintop, the fiend crept in at the iron door, there to abide the intensest element of fire, until

again summoned forth to share in the dreadful task of extending man's possible guilt beyond the scope of Heaven's else infinite mercy.

While the lime-burner was struggling with the horror of these thoughts, Ethan Brand rose from the log, and flung open the door of the kiln. The action was in such accordance with the idea in Bartram's mind, that he almost expected to see the Evil One issue forth, red-hot, from the raging furnace.

"Hold! hold!" cried he, with a tremulous attempt to laugh; for he was ashamed of his fears, although they overmastered him. "Don't, for mercy's sake, bring out your Devil now!"

"Man!" sternly replied Ethan Brand, "what need have I of the Devil? I have left him behind me, on my track. It is with such half-way sinners as you that he busies himself. Fear not, because I open the door. I do but act by old custom, and am going to trim your fire, like a lime-burner, as I was once."

He stirred the vast coals, thrust in more wood, and bent forward to gaze into the hollow prison-house of the fire, regardless of the fierce glow that reddened upon his face. The lime-burner sat watching him, and half suspected this strange guest of a purpose, if not to evoke a fiend, at least to plunge bodily into the flames, and thus vanish from the sight of man. Ethan Brand, however, drew quietly back, and closed the door of the kiln.

"I have looked," said he, "into many a human heart that was seven times hotter with sinful passions than yonder furnace is with fire. But I found not there what I sought. No, not the Unpardonable Sin!"

"What is the Unpardonable Sin?" asked the lime-burner; and then he shrank farther from his companion, trembling lest his question should be answered.

"It is a sin that grew within my own breast," replied Ethan Brand, standing erect, with a pride that distinguishes all enthusiasts of his stamp. "A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony! Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly I accept the retribution!"

"The man's head is turned," muttered the lime-burner to himself. "He may be a sinner like the rest of us,—nothing more likely,—but, I'll be sworn, he is a madman too."

Nevertheless, he felt uncomfortable at his situation, alone with Ethan Brand on the wild mountain-side, and was right glad to hear the rough murmur of tongues, and the footsteps of what seemed a pretty numerous party, stumbling over the stones and rustling through the underbrush. Soon appeared the whole lazy regiment that was

went to infest the village tavern, comprehending three or four individuals who had drunk flip beside the bar-room fire through all the winters, and smoked their pipes beneath the stoop through all the summers, since Ethan Brand's departure. Laughing boisterously, and mingling all their voices together in unceremonious talk, they now burst into the moonshine and narrow streaks of firelight that illuminated the open space before the lime-kiln. Bartram set the door ajar again, flooding the spot with light, that the whole company might get a fair view of Ethan Brand, and he of them.

There, among other old acquaintances, was a once ubiquitous man, now almost extinct, but whom we were formerly sure to encounter at the hotel of every thriving village throughout the country. It was the stage-agent. The present specimen of the genus was a wilted and smoke-dried man, wrinkled and red-nosed, in a smartly cut, brown, bob-tailed coat, with brass buttons, who, for a length of time unknown, had kept his desk and corner in the bar-room, and was still puffing what seemed to be the same cigar that he had lighted twenty years before. He had great fame as a dry joker, though, perhaps, less on account of any intrinsic humor than from a certain flavor of brandy-toddy and tobacco-smoke, which impregnated all his ideas and expressions, as well as his person. Another well-remembered, though strangely altered, face was that of Lawyer Giles, as people still called him in courtesy; an elderly ragamuffin, in his soiled shirt-sleeves and tow-cloth trousers. This poor fellow had been an attorney, in what he called his better days, a sharp practitioner, and in great vogue among the village litigants; but flip, and sling, and toddy, and cocktails, imbibed at all hours, morning, noon, and night, had caused him to slide from intellectual to various kinds and degrees of bodily labor, till at last, to adopt his own phrase, he slid into a soap-vat. In other words, Giles was now a soap-boiler, in a small way. He had come to be but the fragment of a human being, a part of one foot having been chopped off by an axe, and an entire hand torn away by the devilish grip of a steam-engine. Yet, though the corporeal hand was gone, a spiritual member remained; for, stretching forth the stump, Giles steadfastly averred that he felt an invisible thumb and fingers with as vivid a sensation as before the real ones were amputated. A maimed and miserable wretch he was; but one, nevertheless, whom the world could not trample on, and had no right to scorn, either in this or any previous stage of his misfortunes, since he had still kept up the courage and spirit of a man, asked nothing in charity, and with his one hand—and that the left one—fought a stern battle against want and hostile circumstances.

Among the throng, too, came another personage, who, with certain points of similarity to Lawyer Giles, had many more of difference. It was the village doctor; a man of some fifty years, whom, at



an earlier period of his life, we introduced as paying a professional visit to Ethan Brand during the latter's supposed insanity. He was now a purple-visaged, rude, and brutal, yet half-gentlemanly figure, with something wild, ruined, and desperate in his talk, and in all the details of his gesture and manners. Brandy possessed this man like an evil spirit, and made him as surly and savage as a wild beast, and as miserable as a lost soul; but there was supposed to be in him such wonderful skill, such native gifts of healing, beyond any which medical science could impart, that society caught hold of him, and would not let him sink out of its reach. So, swaying to and fro upon his horse, and grumbling thick accents at the bedside, he visited all the sick-chambers for miles about among the mountain towns, and sometimes raised a dying man, as it were, by miracle, or quite as often, no doubt, sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon. The doctor had an everlasting pipe in his mouth, and, as somebody said, in allusion to his habit of swearing, it was always alight with hell-fire.

These three worthies pressed forward, and greeted Ethan Brand each after his own fashion, earnestly inviting him to partake of the contents of a certain black bottle, in which, as they averred, he would find something far better worth seeking for than the Unpardonable Sin. No mind, which has wrought itself by intense and solitary meditation into a high state of enthusiasm, can endure the kind of contact with low and vulgar modes of thought and feeling to which Ethan Brand was now subjected. It made him doubt—and, strange to say, it was a painful doubt—whether he had indeed found the Unpardonable Sin, and found it within himself. The whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life, looked like a delusion.

"Leave me," he said bitterly, "ye brute beasts, that have made yourselves so, shrivelling up your souls with fiery liquors! I have done with you. Years and years ago, I groped into your hearts, and found nothing there for my purpose. Get ye gone!"

"Why, you uncivil scoundrel," cried the fierce doctor, "is that the way you respond to the kindness of your best friends? Then let me tell you the truth. You have no more found the Unpardonable Sin than yonder boy Joe has. You are but a crazy fellow,—I told you so twenty years ago,—neither better nor worse than a crazy fellow, and the fit companion of old Humphrey, here!"

He pointed to an old man, shabbily dressed, with long white hair, thin visage, and unsteady eyes. For some years past this aged person had been wandering about among the hills, inquiring of all travellers whom he met for his daughter. The girl, it seemed, had gone off with a company of circus-performers; and occasionally tidings of her came to the village, and fine stories were told of her glittering ap-

pearance as she rode on horseback in the ring, or performed marvellous feats on the tight-rope.

The white-haired father now approached Ethan Brand, and gazed unsteadily into his face.

"They tell me you have been all over the earth," said he, wringing his hands with earnestness. "You must have seen my daughter, for she makes a grand figure in the world, and everybody goes to see her. Did she send any word to her old father, or say when she was coming back?"

Ethan Brand's eye quailed beneath the old man's. That daughter, from whom he so earnestly desired a word of greeting, was the Esther of our tale, the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process.

"Yes," murmured he, turning away from the hoary wanderer; "it is no delusion. There is an Unpardonable Sin!"

While these things were passing, a merry scene was going forward in the area of cheerful light, beside the spring and before the door of the hut. A number of the youth of the village, young men and girls, had hurried up the hillside, impelled by curiosity to see Ethan Brand, the hero of so many a legend familiar to their childhood. Finding nothing, however, very remarkable in his aspect,—nothing but a sunburnt wayfarer, in plain garb and dusty shoes, who sat looking into the fire as if he fancied pictures among the coals,—these young people speedily grew tired of observing him. As it happened, there was other amusement at hand. An old German Jew, travelling with a diorama<sup>4</sup> on his back, was passing down the mountain-road towards the village just as the party turned aside from it, and, in hopes of eking out the profits of the day, the showman had kept them company to the lime-kiln.

"Come, old Dutchman," cried one of the young men, "let us see your pictures, if you can swear they are worth looking at!"

"Oh, yes, Captain," answered the Jew,—whether as a matter of courtesy or craft, he styled everybody Captain,—"I shall show you, indeed, some very superb pictures!"

So, placing his box in a proper position, he invited the young men and girls to look through the glass orifices of the machine, and proceeded to exhibit a series of the most outrageous scratchings and daubings, as specimens of the fine arts, that ever an itinerant showman had the face to impose upon his circle of spectators. The pictures were worn out, moreover, tattered, full of cracks and wrinkles, dingy with tobacco-smoke, and otherwise in a most pitiable condi-

4. A box or chamber with a lens for viewing enlarged pictures, either transparencies or stereoscopic (three-dimensional) views.

tion. Some purported to be cities, public edifices, and ruined castles in Europe; others represented Napoleon's battles and Nelson's sea-fights; and in the midst of these would be seen a gigantic, brown, hairy hand,—which might have been mistaken for the Hand of Destiny, though, in truth, it was only the showman's,—pointing its forefinger to various scenes of the conflict, while its owner gave historical illustrations. When, with much merriment at its abominable deficiency of merit, the exhibition was concluded, the German bade little Joc put his head into the box. Viewed through the magnifying-glasses, the boy's round, rosy visage assumed the strangest imaginable aspect of an immense Titanic child, the mouth grinning broadly, and the eyes and every other feature overflowing with fun at the joke. Suddenly, however, that merry face turned pale, and its expression changed to horror, for this easily impressed and excitable child had become sensible that the eye of Ethan Brand was fixed upon him through the glass.

"You make the little man to be afraid, Captain," said the German Jew, turning up the dark and strong outline of his visage, from his stooping posture. "But look again, and, by chance, I shall cause you to see somewhat that is very fine, upon my word!"

Ethan Brand gazed into the box for an instant, and then starting back, looked fixedly at the German. What had he seen? Nothing, apparently; for a curious youth, who had peeped in almost at the same moment, beheld only a vacant space of canvas.

"I remember you now," muttered Ethan Brand to the showman.

"Ah, Captain," whispered the Jew of Nuremberg, with a dark smile, "I find it to be a heavy matter in my show-box,—this Unpardonable Sin! By my faith, Captain, it has wearied my shoulders, this long day, to carry it over the mountain."

"Peace," answered Ethan Brand, sternly, "or get thee into the furnace yonder!"

The Jew's exhibition had scarcely concluded, when a great, elderly dog—who seemed to be his own master, as no person in the company laid claim to him—saw fit to render himself the object of public notice. Hitherto, he had shown himself a very quiet, well-disposed old dog, going round from one to another, and, by way of being sociable, offering his rough head to be patted by any kindly hand that would take so much trouble. But now, all of a sudden, this grave and venerable quadruped, of his own mere motion, and without the slightest suggestion from anybody else, began to run round after his tail, which, to heighten the absurdity of the proceeding, was a great deal shorter than it should have been. Never was seen such headlong eagerness in pursuit of an object that could not possibly be attained; never was heard such a tremendous outbreak of growling, snarling, barking, and snapping,—as if one end

of the ridiculous brute's body were at deadly and most unforgivable enmity with the other. Faster and faster, round about went the cur; and faster and still faster fled the unapproachable brevity of his tail; and louder and fiercer grew his yells of rage and animosity; until, utterly exhausted, and as far from the goal as ever, the foolish old dog ceased his performance as suddenly as he had begun it. The next moment he was as mild, quiet, sensible, and respectable in his deportment, as when he first scraped acquaintance with the company.

As may be supposed, the exhibition was greeted with universal laughter, clapping of hands, and shouts of encore, to which the canine performer responded by wagging all that there was to wag of his tail, but appeared totally unable to repeat his very successful effort to amuse the spectators.

Meanwhile, Ethan Brand had resumed his seat upon the log, and moved, it might be, by a perception of some remote analogy between his own case and that of this self-pursuing cur, he broke into the awful laugh, which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being. From that moment, the merriment of the party was at an end; they stood aghast, dreading lest the inauspicious sound should be reverberated around the horizon, and that mountain would thunder it to mountain, and so the horror be prolonged upon their ears. Then, whispering one to another that it was late,—that the moon was almost down,—that the August night was growing chill,—they hurried homewards, leaving the lime-burner and little Joe to deal as they might with their unwelcome guest. Save for these three human beings, the open space on the hillside was a solitude, set in a vast gloom of forest. Beyond that darksome verge, the firelight glimmered on the stately trunks and almost black foliage of pines, intermixed with the lighter verdure of sapling oaks, maples, and poplars, while here and there lay the gigantic corpses of dead trees, decaying on the leaf-strewn soil. And it seemed to little Joe—a timorous and imaginative child—that the silent forest was holding its breath until some fearful thing should happen.

Ethan Brand thrust more wood into the fire, and closed the door of the kiln; then looking over his shoulder at the lime-burner and his son, he bade, rather than advised, them to retire to rest.

"For myself, I cannot sleep," said he. "I have matters that it concerns me to meditate upon. I will watch the fire, as I used to do in the old time."

"And call the Devil out of the furnace to keep you company, I suppose," muttered Bartram, who had been making intimate acquaintance with the black bottle above mentioned. "But watch, if you like, and call as many devils as you like! For my part, I shall be all the better for a snooze. Come, Joel!"

As the boy followed his father into the hut, he looked back at the wayfarer, and the tears came into his eyes, for his tender spirit had an intuition of the bleak and terrible loneliness in which this man had enveloped himself.

When they had gone, Ethan Brand sat listening to the crackling of the kindled wood, and looking at the little spirits of fire that issued through the chinks of the door. These trifles, however, once so familiar, had but the slightest hold of his attention, while deep within his mind he was reviewing the gradual but marvellous change that had been wrought upon him by the search to which he had devoted himself. He remembered how the night dew had fallen upon him,—how the dark forest had whispered to him,—how the stars had gleamed upon him,—a simple and loving man, watching his fire in the years gone by, and ever musing as it burned. He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother; with what awful fear he had deprecated the success of his pursuit, and prayed that the Unpardonable Sin might never be revealed to him. Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart. The Idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education; it had gone on cultivating his powers to the highest point of which they were susceptible; it had raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer to stand on a starlit eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him. So much for the intellect! But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered,—had contracted,—had hardened,—had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.

Thus Ethan Brand became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect. And now, as his highest effort and inevitable development,—as the bright and gorgeous flower, and rich, delicious fruit of his life's labor,—he had produced the Unpardonable Sin!

"What more have I to seek? what more to achieve?" said Ethan Brand to himself. "My task is done, and well done!"

Starting from the log with a certain alacrity in his gait and ascending the hillock of earth that was raised against the stone circumference of the lime-kiln, he thus reached the top of the structure. It was a space of perhaps ten feet across, from edge to edge, presenting a view of the upper surface of the immense mass of broken marble with which the kiln was heaped. All these innumerable blocks and fragments of marble were red-hot and vividly on fire, sending up great spouts of blue flame, which quivered aloft and danced madly, as within a magic circle, and sank and rose again, with continual and multitudinous activity. As the lonely man bent forward over this terrible body of fire, the blasting heat smote up against his person with a breath that, it might be supposed, would have scorched and shrivelled him up in a moment.

Ethan Brand stood erect, and raised his arms on high. The blue flames played upon his face, and imparted the wild and ghastly light which alone could have suited its expression; it was that of a fiend on the verge of plunging into his gulf of intensest torment.

"O Mother Earth," cried he, "who art no more my Mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved! O mankind, whose brotherhood I have cast off, and trampled thy great heart beneath my feet! O stars of heaven, that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward!—farewell all, and forever. Come, deadly element of Fire,—henceforth my familiar frame! Embrace me, as I do thee!"

That night the sound of a fearful peal of laughter rolled heavily through the sleep of the lime-burner and his little son; dim shapes of horror and anguish haunted their dreams, and seemed still present in the rude hovel, when they opened their eyes to the daylight.

"Up, boy, up!" cried the lime-burner, staring about him. "Thank Heaven, the night is gone, at last; and rather than pass such another, I would watch my lime-kiln, wide awake, for a twelvemonth. This Ethan Brand, with his humbug of an Unpardonable Sin, has done me no such mighty favor, in taking my place!"

He issued from the hut, followed by little Joe, who kept fast hold of his father's hand. The early sunshine was already pouring its gold upon the mountain-tops, and though the valleys were still in shadow, they smiled cheerfully in the promise of the bright day that was hastening onward. The village, completely shut in by hills, which swelled away gently about it, looked as if it had rested peacefully in the hollow of the great hand of Providence. Every dwelling was distinctly visible; the little spires of the two churches pointed upwards, and caught a foreglimmering of brightness from the sun-gilt skies upon their gilded weathercocks. The tavern was astir, and the

figure of the old, smoke-dried stage-agent, cigar in mouth, was seen beneath the stoop. Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered likewise over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mist, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the valley, others high up towards the summits, and still others, of the same family of mist or cloud, hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it.

To supply that charm of the familiar and homely, which Nature so readily adopts into a scene like this, the stage coach was rattling down the mountain-road, and the driver sounded his horn, while Echo caught up the notes, and intertwined them into a rich and varied and elaborate harmony, of which the original performer could lay claim to little share. The great hills played a concert among themselves, each contributing a strain of airy sweetness.

Little Joe's face brightened at once.

"Dear father," cried he, skipping cheerily to and fro, "that strange man is gone, and the sky and the mountains all seem glad of it!"

"Yes," growled the lime-burner, with an oath, "but he has let the fire go down, and no thanks to him if five hundred bushels of lime are not spoiled. If I catch the fellow hereabouts again, I shall feel like tossing him into the furnace!"

With his long pole in his hand, he ascended to the top of the kiln. After a moment's pause, he called to his son.

"Come up here, Joe!" said he.

So little Joe ran up the hillock, and stood by his father's side. The marble was all burnt into perfect, snow-white lime. But on its surface, in the midst of the circle,—snow-white too, and thoroughly converted into lime,—lay a human skeleton, in the attitude of a person who, after long toil, lies down to long repose. Within the ribs—strange to say—was the shape of a human heart.

"Was the fellow's heart made of marble?" cried Bartram, in some perplexity at this phenomenon. "At any rate, it is burnt into what looks like special good lime; and, taking all the bones together, my kiln is half a bushel the richer for him."

So saying, the rude lime-burner lifted his pole, and, letting it fall upon the skeleton, the relics of Ethan Brand were crumbled into fragments.

## EDGAR ALLAN POE

(1809-1849)

A century and more after his death, Poe is still among the most popular of American authors. Cheap reprints of his stories and poems circulate even from newsstands, but unlike most authors of extreme popularity, Poe has also exerted a continuous influence on the most advanced writers and critics.

His works are directed toward universal human responses, which change very little, if at all, with the passing of time and events. He influenced the course of creative writing and criticism by emphasizing the art that appeals simultaneously to reason and to emotion, and by insisting that the work of art is not a fragment of the author's life, nor an adjunct to some didactic purpose, but an object created in the cause of beauty—which he defined in its largest spiritual implications. This creative act, according to Poe, involves the utmost concentration and unity, together with the most scrupulous use of words.

This definition of sensibility was directly opposed to the view implicit in the prevailing American literature of Poe's generation, as represented in general by the works of Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, and Holmes, all born in the years from 1803 to 1809. These others turned toward Wordsworth, while Poe took Coleridge as his lodestar in his search for a consistent theory of art. Hawthorne's symbolism links him

with Poe, but Hawthorne's impulses were primarily didactic, while Poe taught no moral lessons except the discipline of beauty. Only in Melville, among the authors before the Civil War, does one find a similar sensibility expressed in symbolism. The literary tradition of Poe, preserved by European symbolism, especially in France, played a considerable part in shaping the spirit of our twentieth-century literature, particularly in its demand for the intellectual analysis and controlled perception of emotional consciousness.

The familiar legend of Poe is at variance with his actual personality. Finding himself in conflict with the prevailing spirit of his age, he took refuge in the Byronic myth of the lonely and misunderstood artist. Indeed, his neurotic personality sometimes resembled that of his own fictional characters; it is much easier to see now, than it was then, how vastly sublimated are the actual events which first suggested "To Helen" or "Ligeia."

The son of itinerant actors, he was born in Boston, January 19, 1809. His father, David Poe, apparently deserted his wife and disappeared about eighteen months later. Elizabeth Arnold Poe, an English-born actress, died during a tour, in Richmond in 1811, and her infant son became the ward of the Allan family, although he was never legally adopted. John Allan was



a substantial Scottish tobacco exporter; Mrs. Allan lavished on the young poet the erratic affections of the childless wife of a somewhat unfaithful husband. In time this situation led to tensions and jealousies which permanently estranged Poe from his foster father; but in youth he enjoyed the genteel and thorough education, with none of the worldly expectations, of a young Virginia gentleman.

Allan's business interests took him abroad, and Poe lived with the family in England and Scotland from 1815 to 1820, attending a fine classical preparatory school at Stoke Newington for three years. When he was eleven, the family returned to Richmond, where he continued his studies at a local academy. His precocious adoration of Jane Stith Stanard, the young mother of a schoolfellow, later inspired the lyric "To Helen," according to his own report. At this period he considered himself engaged to Sarah Elmira Royster. Her father's objections to a stripling with no prospects resulted in her engagement to another while Poe was at the University of Virginia in 1826. His gambling debts prompted Allan to remove him from the University within a year, in spite of his obvious academic competence.

Unable to come to terms with Allan, who wanted to employ him in the business, Poe ran away to Boston, where he published *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827), significantly signed "By a Bostonian"; then he disappeared into the army under the name of "Edgar A. Perry." The death of Mrs. Allan

produced a temporary reconciliation with Allan, who offered to seek an appointment to West Point for the young sergeant major. Poe secured a discharge from the army, and published *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* (1829). Before entering West Point (July 1, 1830) he again had a violent disagreement with Allan, who still declined to assure his prospects. Finding himself unsuited to the life at the Academy, he provoked a dismissal by an infraction of duty, and left three weeks before March 6, 1831, when he was officially excluded. Allan, who had married again, refused to befriend him; two years later his death ended all expectations. Meanwhile, in New York, Poe had published *Poems* (1831), again without results that would suggest his ability to survive by writing.

From 1831 to 1835 Poe lived as a hack writer in Baltimore, with his aunt, the motherly Mrs. Maria Poe Clemm, whose daughter, Virginia, later became his wife. This period of poverty and struggle is almost a merciful blank on the record.

In 1832 the Philadelphia *Saturday Courier* published Poe's first five short stories, a part of the *Tales of the Folio Club*. In 1833 his first characteristic short story, combining pseudoscience and terror, won a prize of fifty dollars and publication in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*. "MS Found in a Bottle" appeared on October 12, heralding the success of the formula for popular fiction which Poe was slowly developing by a close study of periodical literature. The prize

story won him friends, and ultimately an assistant editorship on the *Richmond Southern Literary Messenger* (1835-1837). In September, 1835, Poe secretly married his cousin, Virginia Clemm; the ceremony was repeated publicly in Richmond eight months later, when Virginia was not quite fourteen.

Poe's experience with the *Messenger* set a pattern which was to continue, with minor variations, in later editorial associations. He was a brilliant editor; he secured important contributors; he attracted attention by his own critical articles. He failed through personal instability. His devotion to Virginia was beset by some insecurity never satisfactorily explained; he had periods of quarrelsomeness which estranged him from his editorial associates. Apparently he left the *Messenger* of his own accord, but during a time of strained relations, with a project for a magazine of his own which he long cherished without result.

After a few months in New York, Poe settled down to his period of greatest accomplishment (1838-1844) in Philadelphia. There he was editor of, or associated with, *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* (1839), *Graham's Magazine* (1841-1842), and *The Saturday Museum* (1843). He became well-known in literary circles as a result of the vitality of his critical articles, which were a by-product of his editorial functions, the publication of new poems and revised versions of others, and the appearance of some of his greatest stories in *Graham's*. He collected from

earlier periodicals his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (2 vols., 1840). His fame was assured by "The Gold Bug," which won the prize of one hundred dollars offered in 1843 by the Philadelphia *Dollar Newspaper*.

Unable to hold a permanent editorial connection in Philadelphia, Poe moved in 1844 to New York, where he found sporadic employment on the *Evening Mirror* and the *Broadway Journal*. For some time it had been evident that Virginia must soon die of tuberculosis, and this apprehension, added to grueling poverty, had increased Poe's eccentricities. Even an occasional escape by alcohol could not go unnoticed in anyone for whom only a moderate indulgence was ruinous, and Poe's reputation, in these years, suffered in consequence. His candid reviews and critical articles increased the number of his enemies, who besmirched his reputation by gossip concerning a number of literary ladies with whom his relations were actually indiscreet but innocent. Yet in 1845 he climaxed his literary life. "The Raven" appeared in the *Mirror*, and in *The Raven and Other Poems*, his major volume of poems. His *Tales* also appeared in New York and London. The Poes found a little cottage at Fordham (now part of New York City) in 1846, and Virginia died there the following January. Poe was feverishly at work on *Eureka* (1848), then deemed the work of a demented mind, but now critically important as a "prose poem" in which he attempted to unify the laws

of physical science with those of aesthetic reality.

His life ended, as it had been lived, in events so strange that he might have invented them. In 1849, learning that Sarah Elmira Royster, his childhood sweetheart, was a widow, he visited Richmond and secured her consent to marry him. About two months later he left for Philadelphia on a business engagement. Six days thereafter he was found unconscious on the streets of Baltimore, and he died in delirium after four days, on October 7, 1849.

During a short life of poverty, anxiety, and fantastic tragedy Poe achieved the establishment of a new symbolic poetry within the small compass of forty-eight poems; the formalization of the new short story; the invention of the story of detection and the broadening of science fiction; the foundation of a new fiction of psychological analysis and symbolism; and the slow development, in various stages, of an important critical theory and

a discipline of analytical criticism.

Of the seven multivolume editions of the works of Poe, all but one are out of print. This is *Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 10 vols., edited by E. C. Stedman and G. E. Woodberry, 1894-1895, a reliable edition, reprinted in 1914. Unless otherwise noted, this is the source of the present texts. A more complete edition, most reliable, is the so-called Virginia Edition, 17 vols., edited by J. A. Harrison, 1902. *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Killis Campbell, 1917, shows the evolution of the texts; the same editor published a scholarly edition of *Poe's Short Stories*, 1927. *The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by A. H. Quinn and E. H. O'Neill, 1946, is excellent. *Edgar Allan Poe: Representative Selections*, edited by M. Alterton and H. Craig, American Writers Series, 1935, contains an excellent critical apparatus.

The standard scholarly biography is *Edgar Allan Poe*, by A. H. Quinn, 1941. Valuable for their critical quality are G. E. Woodberry, *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe, Personal and Literary*, 2 vols., 1885; rev. 1909; Hervey Allen, *Israel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe*, 2 vols., 1926; Killis Campbell, *The Mind of Poe and Other Studies*, 1933; and N. B. Fagin, *The Histrionic Mr. Poe*, 1949. *The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, 2 vols., were edited by J. W. Ostrom, 1948. Recent and comprehensive is E. H. Davidson's *Poe, A Critical Study*, 1957.

## Romance

Romance, who loves to nod and sing,  
With drowsy head and folded wing,  
Among the green leaves as they shake  
Far down within some shadowy lake,  
To me a painted paroquet  
Hath been—a most familiar bird—  
Taught me my alphabet to say,  
To lisp my very earliest word,  
While in the wild wood I did lie,  
A child—with a most knowing eye.

Of late, eternal Condor<sup>1</sup> years  
 So shake the very Heaven on high  
 With tumult as they thunder by,  
 I have no time for idle cares  
 Through gazing on the unquiet sky. 15  
 And when an hour with calmer wings  
 Its down upon my spirit flings—  
 That little time with lyre and rhyme  
 To while away—forbidden things!  
 My heart would feel to be a crime 20  
 Unless it trembled with the strings.

1829

## Sonnet—To Science

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!  
 Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.  
 Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,  
 Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?  
 How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise? 5  
 Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering  
 To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies.  
 Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?  
 Hast thou not dragged Diana<sup>7</sup> from her car?  
 And driven the Hamadryad from the wood 10  
 To seek a shelter in some happier star?  
 Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,  
 The Elfin from the green grass, and from me  
 The summer dream beneath the tamarind<sup>2</sup> tree?

1829

1829, 1845

Lenore<sup>3</sup>

Ah, broken is the golden bowl!<sup>4</sup>—the spirit flown forever!  
 Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on the Stygian<sup>5</sup> river:—

1. The Andean vulture, noted for courage and ruthlessness; a familiar figure in South American literature.

7. Roman goddess, whose "car" was the moon. She was revered for her chastity; cf. "Dian" in "Ulalume."

2. An oriental tree probably unknown in actuality to Poe.

3. "Lenore" first appeared as "A Pæan" in the 1831 volume, and was revised three times. The final form, given here, appeared in the *Richmond Whig*, September 18, 1849. Originally it was in short lines, indicated in general by the

internal rimes in the present text. The dirge for the delicate girl killed by the cruelty or falseness of her family or lover was conventional in romantic poetry; but this poem recalls the poet's resentment at the marriage, which he ascribed to a cruel intrigue, of his sweetheart, Miss Royster, to an older man of wealth; and his grief at the death of his foster mother, Mrs. Allan.

4. Cf. Ecclesiastes xii: 6.

5. The river Styx, in Greek mythology, separates the world of the living from the Hades of death.

And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear?—weep now or never more!  
 See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!  
 Come, let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung!— 5  
 An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young—  
 A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.

“Wretches!<sup>6</sup> ye loved her for her wealth, and ye hated her for her  
 pride;  
 And, when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her—that she died:—  
 How *shall* the ritual, then, be read—the requiem how be sung 10  
 By you—by yours, the evil eye,—by yours, the slanderous tongue  
 That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?”

*Peccavimus*;<sup>7</sup> yet rave not thus! but let a Sabbath song  
 Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no wrong!  
 The sweet Lenore hath gone before, with Hope that flew beside. 15  
 Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy  
 bride—  
 For her, the fair and debonair, that now so lowly lies,  
 The life upon her yellow hair, but not within her eyes—  
 The life still there upon her hair, the death upon her eyes.

“Avaunt!—avaunt! to friends from fiends the indignant ghost is  
 riven— 20  
 From Hell unto a high estate within the utmost Heaven—  
 From moan and groan to a golden throne beside the King of  
 Heaven:—

Let no bell toll, then, lest her soul, amid its hallowed mirth,  
 Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damned Earth!  
 And I—to-night my heart is light:—no dirge will I upraise, 25  
 But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days!”

1831, 1849

## The Sleeper<sup>8</sup>

At midnight, in the month of June,  
 I stand beneath the mystic moon.  
 An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,  
 Exhales from out her golden rim,  
 And, softly dripping, drop by drop, 5  
 Upon the quiet mountain top,

6. Stanzas 2 and 4, between quotation marks, are the lover's address to the “wretches,” Lenore's false friends.

7. We have sinned.

8. As “Irene” in the 1831 volume, the poem contained only the substance of

“The Sleeper,” which emerged in the 1845 volume as given here, after several revisions.

9. The superstition that night air and moonlight had deadly effects, especially on delicate girls, outlived the century.

Steals drowsily and musically  
 Into the universal valley.  
 The rosemary<sup>1</sup> nods upon the grave;  
 The lily lolls upon the wave; 10  
 Wrapping the fog about its breast,  
 The ruin moulders into rest;  
 Looking like Lethc,<sup>2</sup> see! the lake  
 A conscious slumber seems to take,  
 And would not, for the world, awake. 15  
 All Beauty sleeps!—and lo! where lies  
 (Her casement open to the skies)  
 Irene, with her Destinies!

Oh, lady bright! can it be right—  
 This window open to the night? 20  
 The wanton airs, from the tree-top,  
 Laughingly through the lattice drop—  
 The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,  
 Flit through thy chamber in and out,  
 And wave the curtain canopy 25  
 So fitfully—so carefully—  
 Above the closed and fringed lid  
 'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,  
 That, o'er the floor and down the wall,  
 Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall! 30  
 Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?  
 Why and what art thou dreaming here?  
 Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,  
 A wonder to these garden trees!  
 Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress! 35  
 Strange, above all, thy length of tress,<sup>3</sup>  
 And this all solemn silentness!

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,  
 Which is enduring, so be deep!  
 Heaven have her in its sacred keep! 40  
 This chamber changed for one more holy,  
 This bed for one more melancholy,  
 I pray to God that she may lie  
 Forever with unopened eye,  
 While the dim sheeted ghosts go by! 45

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,  
 As it is lasting, so be deep!

1. The flower of rosemary is a symbol of fidelity or remembrance; cf. Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene v, l. 174.

2. In Greek mythology, a river of Hades

whose water provided forgetfulness.

3. A familiar superstition held that the hair grew very rapidly just after death.

Soft may the worms about her creep!<sup>4</sup>  
 Far in the forest, dim and old,  
 For her may some tall vault unfold— 50  
 Some vault that oft hath flung its black  
 And winged panels fluttering back,  
 Triumphant, o'er the crested palls,  
 Of her grand family funerals—  
 Some sepulchre, remote, alone, 55  
 Against whose portal she hath thrown,  
 In childhood, many an idle stone—  
 Some tomb from out whose sounding door  
 She ne'er shall force an echo more,  
 Thrilling to think, poor child of sin! 60  
 It was the dead who groaned within.

1831, 1845

### Israfel<sup>5</sup>

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell  
 "Whose heart-strings are a lute";  
 None sing so wildly well  
 As the angel Israfel,  
 And the giddy stars (so legends tell) 5  
 Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell  
 Of his voice, all mute.  
 Tottering above  
 In her highest noon,  
 The enamored moon 10  
 Blushes with love,  
 While, to listen, the red levin<sup>6</sup>

4. The good taste of this line has been called in question, but the figure was common to the romance of melancholy. Campbell (*The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, p. 213) cites Shelley (*Rosalind and Helen*, l. 345): "And the crawling worms were cradling her"; and Byron (*Giaour*, ll. 945-946): "It is as if the dead could feel / The icy worm around them steal \* \* \*"

5. As in "Al Aaraaf," with which this may be compared, Poe here attempts to express a poetic creed, emphasized by the motto which he had printed, either above or below the text, in a number of editions: "And the angel Israfel, [whose heart-strings are a lute,] and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. —KORAN." Except for the phrase

within brackets, this quotation was adapted from George Sale's translation of the Koran, Section IV (1734), in which Israfel is represented as one of the four angels beside the throne of God. In 1845 and subsequent editions, Poe interpolated the bracketed words, also the second line of his poem. Campbell (*The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, p. 203) finds the source of this line in De Béranger's "Le Refus" (ll. 41-42), which Poe used in 1839 as the motto for "The Fall of the House of Usher," as follows: "Son cœur est un luth suspendu; / Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne" ("His heart is a suspended lute; Whenever one touches it, it resounds").  
 6. Lightning.

(With the rapid Pleiads, even,  
Which were seven)<sup>7</sup>  
Pauses in Heaven.

15

And they say (the starry choir  
And the other listening things)  
That Israfeeli's fire  
Is owing to that lyre  
By which he sits and sings—  
The trembling living wire  
Of those unusual strings.

20

But the skies that angel trod,  
Where deep thoughts are a duty—  
Where Love's a grown-up God—  
Where the Houris<sup>8</sup> glances are  
Imbued with all the beauty  
Which we worship in a star.

25

Therefore, thou art not wrong,  
Israfeeli, who despisest  
An unimpassioned song;  
To thee the laurels belong,  
Best bard, because the wisest!  
Merrily live, and long!

30

The ecstasies above  
With thy burning measures suit—  
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,  
With the fervor of thy lute—  
Well may the stars be mute!

35

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this  
Is a world of sweets and sour;  
Our flowers are merely—flowers,  
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss  
Is the sunshine of ours.

40

If I could dwell  
Where Israfeeli  
Hath dwelt, and he where I,  
He might not sing so wildly well  
A mortal melody,  
While a bolder note than this might swell  
From my lyre within the sky.

45

50

7. Classic myth saw this constellation as seven sisters, one of them hidden for her shame.

1831, 1845  
8. A nymph of the Mohammedan paradise.



To Helen<sup>9</sup>

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
 Like those Nicean<sup>1</sup> barks of yore,  
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
 'The weary, way-worn wanderer bore  
 To his own native shore.

5

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
 Thy hyacinth hair,<sup>2</sup> thy classic face,  
 Thy Naiad<sup>3</sup> airs have brought me home  
 To the glory that was Greece  
 And the grandeur that was Rome.<sup>4</sup>

10

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche  
 How statue-like I see thee stand!  
 The agate lamp within thy hand,<sup>5</sup>  
 Ah! Psyche, from the regions which  
 Are Holy Land!

15

1823

1831, 1845

9. Poe traced the inspiration of this lyric to "the first purely ideal love of my soul," Mrs. Jane Stith Stanard, a young Richmond neighbor, who died in 1824. Poe approved Lowell's statement that he wrote the first draft a year earlier, at fourteen. It was rigorously revised; the personal element is almost wholly sublimated in the idealization of the tradition of pure beauty in art.

1. No wholly convincing identification has been made. Perhaps Poe used this word merely because it is musical and suggestive. All guesses have suggested Mediterranean and classical associations, referring to cultural pilgrimages of Catullus, Bacchus, or Ulysses, thus conforming to the sense of the following three lines. The conjectures, with supporting references, are summarized in Campbell (*Poems*, p. 201); the Catullus theory is added by J. J. Jones in "Poe's 'Nicean Barks'" (*American Literature*, II, 1931, 433-438).

2. In "Ligeia" (below), Poe associates "the Homeric epithet, 'hyacinthine'" with "raven-black \* \* \* and naturally-curling tresses"; in another story, "The

Assiguation," a girl's hair resembles the "clustered curls" of "the young hyacinth"; and in classic myth, the flower preserved the memory of Apollo's love for the dead young Hyacinthus. Cf. the following phrase, "thy classic face."

3. The naiads of classical myth were nymphs associated with fresh water (lakes, rivers, fountains). Cf. "desperate seas," above.

4. Compare these perfect lines with those of the first version (*Poems*, 1831): "To the beauty of fair Greece, / And the grandeur of old Rome."

5. Byron's early influence has been perceived in these three lines (Campbell, *Poems*, p. 203); but it has not been recalled that Byron once emulated Leander, the legendary Greek lover, who nightly swam the Hellespont, guided to Hero's arms by her lamp, aloft on a tower. Byron wrote passionately of these lovers in *The Bride of Abydos*, II, stanza 1. Lamps and vessels were sometimes made of agate in antiquity, and the stone was a talismanic symbol of immortality.

The City in the Sea<sup>6</sup>

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne  
 In a strange city lying alone  
 Far down within the dim West,  
 Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best  
 Have gone to their eternal rest. 5  
 There shrines and palaces and towers  
 (Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)  
 Resemble nothing that is ours.  
 Around, by lifting winds forgot,  
 Resignedly beneath the sky 10  
 The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down  
 On the long night-time of that town;  
 But light from out the lurid sea  
 Streams up the turrets silently— 15  
 Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—  
 Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—  
 Up fanes—up Babylon-like<sup>7</sup> walls—  
 Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers  
 Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers— 20  
 Up many and many a marvellous shrine  
 Whose wreathed friezes intertwine  
 The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly beneath the sky  
 The melancholy waters lie. 25  
 So blend the turrets and shadows there  
 That all seem pendulous in air,  
 While from a proud tower in the town  
 Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves 30  
 Yawn level with the luminous waves;  
 But not the riches there that lie  
 In each idol's diamond eye—  
 Not the gaily-jewelled dead  
 Tempt the waters from their bed; 35

6. The meanings of this poem are emphasized by its earlier titles: "The Doomed City" (1831); "The City of Sin" (1836). Parallels with Byron and Shelley are noted by Campbell (*Poems*, p. 208), but observe the prevalence, in

Poe's poems and tales, of the theme of the dominion of evil.

7. Babylon, in Biblical literature, is the symbol of the wicked city doomed. See, for example, Revelation xvi: 18-19; and Isaiah xiv.

For no ripples curl, alas!  
 Along that wilderness of glass—  
 No swellings tell that winds may be  
 Upon some far-off happier sea—  
 No heavings hint that winds have been  
 On seas less hideously serene. 40

But lo, a stir is in the air!  
 The wave—there is a movement there!  
 As if the towers had thrust aside,  
 In slightly sinking, the dull tide— 45  
 As if their tops had feebly given  
 A void within the filmy Heaven.  
 The waves have now a redder glow—  
 The hours are breathing faint and low—  
 And when, amid no earthly moans, 50  
 Down, down that town shall settle hence,  
 Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,  
 Shall do it reverence.

1831, 1845

## The Coliseum<sup>8</sup>

Type of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary  
 Of lofty contemplation left to Time  
 By buried centuries of pomp and power!  
 At length—at length—after so many days  
 Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst 5  
 (Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie),  
 I kneel, an altered and an humble man,  
 Amid thy shadows, and so drink within  
 My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory!  
 Vastness! and Age! and Memories of Eld! 10  
 Silence! and Desolation! and dim Night!  
 I feel ye now—I feel ye in your strength—  
 O spells more sure than e'er Judæan king<sup>9</sup>  
 Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane!  
 O charms more potent than the rapt Chaldee<sup>1</sup> 15  
 Ever drew down from out the quiet stars!

8. This appeared, with many minor alterations, in five magazines before being collected in the volume of 1845. While Byron's feeling for antiquity is recalled in several lines, the poem bears the genuine stamp of Poe, and represents his best blank verse.

9. Jesus Christ. Gethsemane (l. 14) was the scene of his agony and arrest. Cf. Matthew xxvi: 36.

1. A Semitic people of Babylonia, the fabled astrologers of antiquity.

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls!  
 Here, where a mimic eagle<sup>2</sup> glared in gold,  
 A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat!  
 Here, where the dames of Rome their gilded hair  
 Waved to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle! 20  
 Here, where on golden throne the monarch lolled,  
 Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,  
 Lit by the wan light of the hornèd moon,  
 'The swift and silent lizard of the stones! 25

But stay! these walls—these ivy-clad arcades—  
 'These mouldering plinths—these sad and blackened shafts—  
 'These vague entablatures—this crumbling frieze—  
 'These shattered cornices—this wreck—this ruin—  
 'These stones—alas! these gray stones—are they all— 30  
 All of the famed, and the colossal left  
 By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?

"Not all"—the Echoes answer me—"not all!  
 Prophetic sounds and loud arise forever  
 From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise, 35  
 As melody from Memnon<sup>3</sup> to the Sun.  
 We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule  
 With a despotic sway all giant minds.  
 We are not impotent—we pallid stones.  
 Not all our power is gone—not all our fame— 40  
 Not all the magic of our high renown—  
 Not all the wonder that encircles us—  
 Not all the mysteries that in us lie—  
 Not all the memories that hang upon  
 And cling around about us as a garment, 45  
 Clothing us in a robe of more than glory."

1833, 1845

### To One in Paradise<sup>4</sup>

Thou wast all that to me, love,  
 For which my soul did pine—  
 A green isle in the sea, love,  
 A fountain and a shrine,  
 All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers, 5  
 And all the flowers were mine.

2. The image of an eagle in bronze was carried on a standard by the Roman legions.

3. Slain son of the Dawn, or Aurora; his statue on the Nile was said to re-

spond with harp music at the first light of every dawn. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book XIII, following l. 622; Pausanias, I, 42, Section 2.

4. Poe's fondness for this dirge, which

Ah, dream too bright to last!  
     Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise  
 But to be overcast!  
     A voice from out the Future cries,  
 "On! on!"—but o'er the Past  
     (Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies  
 Mute, motionless, aghast!  
  
 For, alas! alas! with me  
     The light of Life is o'er!  
     No more—no more—no more—  
 (Such language holds the solemn sea  
     To the sands upon the shore)  
 Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,  
     Or the stricken eagle soar!  
  
 And all my days are trances,  
     And all my nightly dreams  
 Are where thy dark eye glances,  
     And where thy footstep gleams—  
 In what ethereal dances,  
     By what eternal streams.

1834, 1845

## Sonnet—Silence

There are some qualities—some incorporate things,  
     That have a double life, which thus is made  
 A type of that twin entity which springs  
     From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.  
 There is a two-fold *Silence*—sea and shore—  
     Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,  
     Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn graces,  
 Some human memories and tearful lore,  
 Render him terrorless: his name's "No More."  
 He is the corporate Silence: dread him not!  
     No power hath he of evil in himself;  
 But should some urgent fate (untimely lot!)  
     Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,  
 That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod  
 No foot of man), commend thyself to God!

1840, 1845

he published in six versions before the 1845 collection, supports the theory that it refers to Miss Royster, lost

sweetheart of his youth, whom he regarded as symbolically dead.

## Dream-Land

By a route obscure and lonely,  
 Haunted by ill angels only,  
 Where an Eidolon,<sup>5</sup> named NIGHT,  
 On a black throne reigns upright,  
 I have reached these lands but newly 5  
 From an ultimate dim Thule<sup>a</sup>—  
 From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,  
 Out of SPACE—out of TIME.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,  
 And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods, 10  
 With forms that no man can discover  
 For the tears that drip all over;  
 Mountains toppling evermore  
 Into seas without a shore;  
 Seas that restlessly aspire, 15  
 Surging, unto skies of fire;  
 Lakes that endlessly outspread  
 Their lone waters, lone and dead,—  
 Their still waters, still and chilly  
 With the snows of the lolling lily. 20

By the lakes that thus outspread  
 Their lone waters, lone and dead,—  
 Their sad waters, sad and chilly  
 With the snows of the lolling lily,—  
 By the mountains—near the river 25  
 Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever,—  
 By the grey woods,—by the swamp  
 Where the toad and the newt encamp,—  
 By the dismal tarns and pools  
 Where dwell the Ghouls,— 30  
 By each spot the most unholy—  
 In each nook most melancholy,—  
 There the traveller meets, aghast,  
 Sheeted Memories of the Past—  
 Shrouded forms that start and sigh 35  
 As they pass the wanderer by—  
 White-robed forms of friends long given,  
 In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven.

5. Literally, an image. Cf. "The Raven" (ll. 46-47), in which Night is also personified as a symbol of Death.

6. In antiquity, the farthest northern limits of the habitable world.

For the heart whose woes are legion  
 'T is a peaceful, soothing region— 40  
 For the spirit that walks in shadow  
 'T is—oh, 't is an Eldorado!<sup>7</sup>  
 But the traveller, travelling through it,  
 May not—dare not openly view it;  
 Never its mysteries are exposed 45  
 To the weak human eye unclosed;  
 So wills its King, who hath forbid  
 The uplifting of the fringed lid;  
 And thus the sad Soul that here passes  
 Beholds it but through darkened glasses. 50

By a route obscure and lonely,  
 Haunted by ill angels only,  
 Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,  
 On a black throne reigns upright,  
 I have wandered home but newly 5  
 From this ultimate dim Thule.

1844, 1845

## The Raven<sup>8</sup>

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
 Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,  
 While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
 As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.  
 " 'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door— 5  
 Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,  
 And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.  
 Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow  
 From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore— 10  
 For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
 Nameless here for evermore.

7. Literally, "The golden"; a legendary city of treasure in Spanish America, sought by explorers—hence, any unattainable, rich goal.

8. Poe left some sixteen manuscript versions of this poem, which was published in eleven magazines before his death. The standard version, followed here, is that of the 1845 edition of the *Poems*. His recapitulation of its creation (see "The Philosophy of Composition") is an excellent example of analytical criti-

cism, substantiating his assertion that he had carefully calculated this poem for popular appeal. Yet the "lost Lenore" is a central experience in Poe's life; the power of the poem depends in considerable degree upon the tension between calculated effect and genuine emotional experience. Lenore is variously identified as Miss Royster, a youthful sweetheart, and as Virginia, his wife, whose long and hopeless illness was ended by death in 1847.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain  
 Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;  
 So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating, 15  
 “ ’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—  
 Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—  
 This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
 “Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore; 20  
 But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,  
 And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,  
 That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the door;—  
 Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fear-  
 ing, 25  
 Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before;  
 But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,  
 And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, “Lenore!”  
 This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, “Lenore!”—  
 Merely this and nothing more. 30

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,  
 Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.  
 “Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;  
 Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—  
 Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;— 35  
 ’Tis the wind and nothing more.”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
 In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;  
 Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;  
 But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door— 40  
 Perched upon a bust of Pallas<sup>9</sup> just above my chamber door—  
 Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
 By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,  
 “Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no  
 craven, 45  
 Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore—  
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”<sup>1</sup>  
 Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

9. Poe’s conscious selection of Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom, for the raven’s perch, recalls his reported attempt, in an early draft, to have the

bitter truth revealed by an owl, Athena’s traditional bird of wisdom.

1. The infernal regions were ruled by Pluto.



Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,  
 Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore; 50  
 For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
 Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—  
 Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
 With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only 55  
 That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.  
 Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—  
 Till I scarcely more than muttered, “Other friends have flown be-  
 fore—  
 On the morrow *he* will leave me as my hopes have flown before.”  
 Then the bird said, “Nevermore.” 60

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,  
 “Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store,  
 Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster  
 Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—  
 Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore 65  
 Of ‘Never—nevermore.’ ”

But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,  
 Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and  
 door;  
 Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
 Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore— 70  
 What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
 Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
 To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;  
 This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining 75  
 On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamplight gloated<sup>2</sup> o’er,  
 But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o’er,  
 She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen  
 censer  
 Swung by angels whose faint foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor. 80  
 “Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath  
 sent thee  
 Respite—respite and nepenthe<sup>3</sup> from thy memories of Lenore!  
 Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”  
 Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

2. A double meaning is inherent in the rare usage of the word “gloated” in the sense of “to refract light from.”

3. In classical mythology, a potion banishing sorrow, as in the *Odyssey*, IV, 419-430.

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—  
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here  
ashore,

Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted— 87

On this home by Horror haunted,—tell me truly, I implore—

Is there—is there balm in Gilead?<sup>4</sup>—tell me—tell me, I implore!"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore." 90

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!

By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both  
adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,<sup>5</sup>

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore." 95

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, up-  
starting—

"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door! 100

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off  
my door!"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming, 105

And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the  
floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

1842–1844

1845

## Ulalume<sup>6</sup>

The skies they were ashen and sober;

The leaves they were crisped and sere—

The leaves they were withering and sere:

4. Cf. Jeremiah viii: 22: "Is there no balm in Gilead?"—a reference to an esteemed medicinal herb from that region.

5. Variant spelling and pronunciation for "Eden."

6. "Ulalume" appears variously with and without the tenth stanza, given here. The poem appeared in four magazines

during Poe's last years of life, 1847–1849. In one of these, the tenth stanza was dropped, as it was in Griswold's edition of Poe's *Works* the next year (1850). But, in the same year Griswold included the poem, *with* the tenth stanza, in the tenth edition of his *Poets and Poetry of America*. This text also agrees with the Ingram manuscript (J. P.

It was night, in the lonesome October  
 Of my most immemorial<sup>7</sup> year: 5  
 It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,  
 In the misty mid region of Weir<sup>8</sup>—  
 It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,  
 In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.  
  
 Here once, through an alley Titanic,<sup>9</sup> 10  
 Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul—  
 Of cypress, with Psyche,<sup>1</sup> my Soul.  
 These were days when my heart was volcanic  
 As the scoriac<sup>2</sup> rivers that roll—  
 As the lavas that restlessly roll 15  
 Their sulphurous currents down Yaanck<sup>3</sup>  
 In the ultimate climes of the pole—  
 That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanck  
 In the realms of the boreal pole.  
  
 Our talk had been serious and sober, 20  
 But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—  
 Our memories were treacherous and sere;  
 For we knew not the month was October,  
 And we marked not the night of the year  
 (Ah, night of all nights in the year!)— 25  
 We noted not the dim lake of Auber  
 ('Though once we had journeyed down here)—  
 We remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,  
 Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.  
  
 And now, as the night was senescent 30  
 And star-dials pointed to morn—  
 As the star-dials hinted of morn—  
 At the end of our path a liquescent  
 And nebulous lustre was born,  
 Out of which a miraculous crescent 35  
 Arose with a duplicate horn—

Morgan Library, New York) that Poe wrote only a month before his death, except for a slight variant in line 28. We have here followed the Ingram reading, since that seems to have been Poe's last preference. Campbell (*The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, p. 273) suggests that Poe may have derived the name "Ulalume" from Latin *ululare*, "to wail."

7. Poe's invention of an intensive, meaning "most memorable." In the years 1846-1847, Poe's troubles reached their crisis in his illness, poverty, literary

quarrels, and the increasing illness and death of Virginia.

8. Auber and Weir are invented poetic place names.

9. Implying both "enormous" and "primeval," since the Titans were the earliest race of Greek gods.

1. The Greek word meant "the soul," the spiritual personality. Cf. Psyche's speech, ll. 51-55.

2. A coinage. Cf. "scoria," meaning "slaggy lava."

3. An imaginary volcano.

Astarte's<sup>4</sup> bediamonded crescent  
Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said: "She is warmer than Dian;  
She rolls through an ether of sighs—  
She revels in a region of sighs." 40

She has seen that the tears are not dry on  
These cheeks, where the worm never dies,<sup>5</sup>  
And has come past the stars of the Lion,<sup>6</sup>  
To point us the path to the skies— 45  
To the Lethean peace of the skies<sup>7</sup>—  
Come up, in despite of the Lion,  
To shine on us with her bright eyes—  
Come up through the lair of the Lion,  
With love in her luminous eyes." 50

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,  
Said: "Sadly this star I mistrust—  
Her pallor I strangely mistrust:  
Ah, hasten!—ah, let us not linger!  
Ah, fly!—let us fly!—for we must." 55  
In terror she spoke, letting sink her  
Wings till they trailed in the dust—  
In agony sobbed, letting sink her  
Plumes till they trailed in the dust—  
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust. 60

I replied: "This is nothing but dreaming:  
Let us on by this tremulous light!  
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!  
Its Sibyllic<sup>8</sup> splendor is beaming  
With Hope and in Beauty to-night:— 65  
See!—it flickers up the sky through the night!  
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,  
And be sure it will lead us aright—  
We surely may trust to a gleaming,  
That cannot but guide us aright, 70  
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night."

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,  
And tempted her out of her gloom—  
And conquered her scruples and gloom;

4. The Phoenician goddess of fertility, and the Ashtoreth of the Old Testament, there condemned for her carnality. A moon goddess, she is here compared with Diana (Dian, l. 39), the Roman huntress of the moon, renowned for chastity.  
5. Cf. Isaiah lxvi: 24.

6. The constellation Leo, here suggesting a danger in the Zodiac, through which Astarte has passed.

7. In classical mythology, the Lethe was the river of forgetfulness.

8. Usually, "Sibylline"; from "Sibyl," any one of several prophetesses of classic myth.

And we passed to the end of the vista, 75  
     But were stopped by the door of a tomb—  
     By the door of a legended tomb;  
 And I said: "What is written, sweet sister,  
     On the door of this legended tomb?"  
 She replied: "Ulalume—Ulalume— 80  
     'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober  
     As the leaves that were crispèd and scre—  
     As the leaves that were withering and scre;  
 And I cried: "It was surely October 85  
     On *this* very night of last year  
     That I journeyed—I journeyed down here!—  
     That I brought a dread burden down here—  
     On this night of all nights in the year,  
     Ah, what demon has tempted me here? 90  
 Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber—  
     This misty mid region of Weir—  
 Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,  
     This ghoulish haunted woodland of Weir."

Said we, then—the two, then: "Ah, can it 95  
     Have been that the woodlandish ghouls—  
     The pitiful, the merciful ghouls—  
 To bar up our way and to ban it  
     From the secret that lies in these wolds—  
     From the thing that lies hidden in these wolds— 100  
 Have drawn up the spectre of a planet  
     From the limbo of lunar souls—  
 This sinfully scintillant planet  
     From the Hell of the planetary souls?"

1847, 1850

### Annabel Lee<sup>3</sup>

It was many and many a year ago,  
     In a kingdom by the sea,  
 That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
     By the name of Annabel Lee;—

3. The text is that of first publication,  
 in the New York *Tribune* for October 9,  
 1849, two days after the poet's death.  
 The poem appeared in two other maga-

zines within three months, and was col-  
 lected in Griswold's edition of Poe's  
*Works* (1850).

And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me. 5

*She* was a child and *I* was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
But we loved with a love that was more than love—  
I and my Annabel Lee— 10  
With a love that the wingéd seraphs of Heaven  
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud by night 15  
Chilling my Annabel Lee;  
So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre  
In this kingdom by the sea. 20

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,  
Went envying her and me:—  
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,  
In this kingdom by the sea)  
That the wind came out of the cloud, chilling 25  
And killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we—  
Of many far wiser than we—  
And neither the angels in Heaven above 30  
Nor the demons down under the sea,  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:—

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee; 35  
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,  
In her sepulchre there by the sea— 40  
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

Ligeia<sup>4</sup>

And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.

—JOSEPH GLANVILL<sup>5</sup>

I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot *now* bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive that they have been unnoticed and unknown. Yet I believe that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine. Of her family—I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted. Ligeia! Ligeia! Buried in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone—by Ligeia—that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have *never known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom. Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice of my own—a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself—what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it. And, indeed, if ever that spirit which is entitled *Romance*—if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged *Ashtophet*<sup>6</sup> of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she

4. Poe once declared that "Ligeia" was his best tale. In his attraction to the theme of psychic survival, especially that of a beautiful woman, he employed reincarnation in "Ligeia" and "Morella" and premature burial in "Berenice" and "The Fall of the House of Usher." In the poems, psychic survival is a persistent overtone, appearing variously in "Al Aaraaf," "Israfel," "Ulalume," "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and—with the serenity of complete sublimation—in "To Helen." "Ligeia" first appeared in the *American Museum* for September, 1838, and was collected in Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840).

5. The source of this epigraph has never been discovered. If Poe invented it, he ascribed it to a likely author. Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680), an English ecclesiastical theorist, was associated with the Cambridge Platonists. Their intuitionist idealism partly embraced cabalism, an ancient Hebrew occultism emphasizing spiritualistic manifestations and the eternity of the soul.

6. Apparently Poe's invention of a deity, suggesting the Phoenician and Egyptian goddess of fertility, Ashtoreth, combined with Tophet, hell, or an imaginary place of chaos associated in the Old Testament with Egyptian worship of Moloch. Cf. Isaiah xxx: 33; II Kings xxiii: 10.

presided over mine.

There is one dear topic, however, on which my memory fails me not. It is the *person* of Ligeia. In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos.<sup>7</sup> Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen. "There is no exquisite beauty," says Bacon, Lord Verulam,<sup>8</sup> speaking truly of all the forms and *genera* of beauty, "without some *strangeness* in the proportion." Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity—although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed "exquisite," and felt that there was much of "strangeness" pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of "the strange." I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead—it was faultless—how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!—the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, "hyacinthine!"<sup>9</sup> I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose—and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a similar perfection. There were the same luxurious smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly—the magnificent turn of the short upper lip—the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under—the dimples which sported, and the color which spoke—the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. I scrutinized the formation of the chin—and here, too, I found the

7. Delos, a Greek island of the Cyclades, the mythological birthplace of the twins Apollo and Artemis, became a shrine. Artemis was attended by maidens sworn to chastity, perhaps Poe's "daughters of Delos." In Asia Minor, Ephesus, and Taurus, and in literature, Artemis as moon-goddess was confused with

Astarte (Ashtoreth); cf. the name "Ashtophet," above, and stanza 4 of "Ulalume."

8. Francis Bacon, *Essays* (1625), "Of Beauty." Bacon wrote "excellent beauty," not "exquisite."

9. Cf. "To Helen."



gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fullness and the spirituality, of the Greek—the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream, to Cleomenes,<sup>1</sup> the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulam alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was only at intervals—in moments of intense excitement—that peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia. And at such moments was her beauty—in my heated fancy thus it appeared perhaps—the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth—the beauty of the fabulous Houris<sup>3</sup> of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The “strangeness,” however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the *expression*. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. The expression of the eyes of Ligeia! How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it—that something more profound than the well of Democritus<sup>4</sup>—which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What was it? I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! they became to me twin stars of Leda,<sup>5</sup> and I to them devoutest of astrologers.

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact—never, I believe, noticed in the schools—that, in our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia’s eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length entirely depart! And (strange, oh strangest mystery of all!)

1. The Venus de’ Medici bears the signature of Cleomenes, possibly a late forgery; and Apollo, patron of the arts, is suggested by Poe as the source of the sculptor’s inspiration.

2. *The History of Nourjahad* (1767), an oriental romance by Frances Sheridan (1724–1766), was still familiar.

3. A nymph of the Mohammedan paradise.

4. Democritus, the Greek “laughing philosopher” of the fifth century B.C., one of whose surviving fragments is the source of the proverb, “Truth lies at the bottom of a well.”

5. In the constellation Gemini, according to Greek myth, the two bright stars are Castor and Pollux, twin sons of the mortal Leda and the god Zeus, who visited her as a swan.

I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression. I mean to say that, subsequently to the period when Ligeia's beauty passed into my spirit, there dwelling as in a shrine, I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always aroused within me by her large and luminous orbs. Yet not the more could I define that sentiment, or analyze, or even steadily view it. I recognized it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly-growing vine—in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water. I have felt it in the ocean; in the falling of a meteor. I have felt it in the glances of unusually aged people. And there are one or two stars in heaven (one especially, a star of the sixth magnitude, double and changeable, to be found near the large star in Lyra<sup>6</sup>) in a telescopic scrutiny of which I have been made aware of the feeling. I have been filled with it by certain sounds from stringed instruments, and not unfrequently by passages from books. Among innumerable other instances, I well remember something in a volume of Joseph Glanvill, which (perhaps merely from its quaintness—who shall say?) never failed to inspire me with the sentiment;—"And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

Length of years, and subsequent reflection, have enabled me to trace, indeed, some remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia. An *intensity* in thought, action, or speech, was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence. Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion. And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes which at once so delighted and appalled me—by the almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness and placidity of her very low voice—and by the fierce energy (rendered doubly effective by contrast with her manner of utterance) of the wild words which she habitually uttered.

I have spoken of the learning of Ligeia: it was immense—such as I have never known in woman. In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient, and as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe, I have never known her at fault. In-

6. The constellation contains two double stars. Poe's "large star" is Vega, or Alpha Lyrae, of the first magnitude.

The other, lower and to the left, is Epsilon Lyrae, requiring a telescope, as he says, for observation.

deed upon any theme of the most admired, because simply the most abstruse of the boasted erudition of the academy, have I *ever* found Ligeia at fault? How singularly—how thrillingly, this one point in the nature of my wife has forced itself, at this late period only, upon my attention! I said her knowledge was such as I have never known in woman—but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science? I saw not then what I now clearly perceive, that the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding; yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself, with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation at which I was most busily occupied during the earlier years of our marriage. With how vast a triumph—with how vivid a delight—with how much of all that is ethereal in hope—did I *feel*, as she bent over me in studies but little sought—but less known—that delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!

How poignant, then, must have been the grief with which, after some years, I beheld my well-grounded expectations take wings to themselves and fly away! Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted. Her presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism in which we were immersed. Wanting the radiant lustre of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead.<sup>7</sup> And now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored. Ligeia grew ill. The wild eyes blazed with a too—too glorious effulgence; the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave, and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion. I saw that she must die—and I struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael.<sup>8</sup> And the struggles of the passionate wife were, to my astonishment, even more energetic than my own. There had been much in her stern nature to impress me with the belief that, to her, death would have come without its terrors;—but not so. Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow. I groaned in anguish at the pitiable spectacle. I would have soothed—I would have reasoned; but, in the intensity of her wild desire for life,—for life—*but* for life—solace and reason were alike the uttermost of folly. Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writhings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanor. Her voice

7. In ancient alchemy and chemistry, lead bore the name of Saturn. Cf. "satur-

8. In Mohammedan and Hebrew mythology, the Angel of Death.

grew more gentle—grew more low—yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words. My brain reeled as I hearkened entranced, to a melody more than mortal—to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known.

That she loved me I should not have doubted; and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion. But in death only, was I fully impressed with the strength of her affection. For long hours, detaining my hand, would she pour out before me the overflowing of a heart whose more than passionate devotion amounted to idolatry. How had I deserved to be so blessed by such confessions?—how had I deserved to be so cursed with the removal of my beloved in the hour of her making them? But upon this subject I cannot bear to dilate. Let me say only, that in Ligcia's more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! all unmerited, all unworthily bestowed, I at length recognized the principle of her longing with so wildly earnest a desire for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away. It is this wild longing—it is this eager vehemence of desire for life—but for life—that I have no power to portray—no utterance capable of expressing.

At high noon of the night in which she departed, beckoning me, peremptorily, to her side, she bade me repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before. I obeyed her.—They were these:<sup>9</sup>

Lo! 'tis a gala night  
 Within the lonesome latter years!  
 An angel throng, bewinged, bedight  
 In veils, and drowned in tears,  
 Sit in a theatre, to see  
 A play of hopes and fears,  
 While the orchestra breathes fitfully  
 The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,  
 Mutter and mumble low,  
 And hither and thither fly—  
 Mere puppets they, who come and go  
 At bidding of vast formless things  
 That shift the scenery to and fro,  
 Flapping from out their Condor wings  
 Invisible Wo!

That motley drama!—oh, be sure  
 It shall not be forgot!

9. This poem was not a part of the story as first published in 1838. Entitled "The Conqueror Worm," it appeared separately in *Graham's Magazine* for

January, 1843; it was first incorporated in the version of the tale printed in the *Broadway Journal* for September 27, 1845.

With its Phantom chased forever more,  
 By a crowd that seize it not,  
 Through a circle that ever returneth in  
 To the self-same spot,  
 And much of Madness and more of Sin  
 And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout,  
 A crawling shape intrude!  
 A blood-red thing that writhes from out  
 The scenic solitude!  
 It writhes!—it writhes! with mortal pangs  
 The mimes become its food,  
 And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs  
 In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!  
 And over each quivering form,  
 The curtain, a funeral pall,  
 Comes down with the rush of a storm,  
 And the angels, all pallid and wan,  
 Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
 That the play is the tragedy, “Man,”  
 And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

“O God!” half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines—“O God! O Divine Father!—shall these things be undeviatingly so?—shall this Conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who—who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor? Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.”

And now, as if exhausted with emotion, she suffered her white arms to fall, and returned solemnly to her bed of Death. And as she breathed her last sighs, there came mingled with them a low murmur from her lips. I bent to them my ear and distinguished, again, the concluding words of the passage in Glanvill—“*Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.*”

She died;—and I, crushed into the very dust with sorrow, could no longer endure the lonely desolation of my dwelling in the dim and decaying city by the Rhine. I had no lack of what the world calls wealth. Ligeia had brought me far more, very far more than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals. After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and

least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honored memories connected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. Yet although the external abbey, with its verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way, with a child-like perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows, to a display of more than regal magnificence within.—For such follies, even in childhood, I had imbibed a taste and now they came back to me as if in the dotage of grief. Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture, in the Bedlam patterns of the carpets of tufted gold! I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and my orders had taken a coloring from my dreams. But these absurdities I must not pause to detail. Let me speak only of that one chamber, ever accursed, whither in a moment of mental alienation, I led from the altar as my bride—as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia—the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion, of Tremaine.

There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration of that bridal chamber which is not now visibly before me. Where were the souls of the haughty family of the bride, when, through thirst of gold, they permitted to pass the threshold of an apartment so bedecked, a maiden and a daughter so beloved? I have said that I minutely remember the details of the chamber—yet I am sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment—and here there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display, to take hold upon the memory. The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window—an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice—a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon, passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window, extended the trellice-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the massy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druiddical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting, depended, by a single chain of gold with long links, a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-colored fires.

Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about—and there was the couch, too—the bridal couch—of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor,<sup>1</sup> with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief phantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height—even unproportionably so—were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry—tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies—giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In halls such as these—in a bridal chamber such as this—I passed, with the Lady of Tremaine, the unhallowed hours of the first month of our marriage—passed them with but little disquietude. That my wife dreaded the fierce moodiness of my temper—that she shunned me and loved me but little—I could not help perceiving; but it gave me rather pleasure than otherwise. I loathed her with a hatred belonging more to demon than to man. My memory flew back (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to *Ligeia*, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love. Now, then, did my spirit fully and freely burn with more than all the fires of her own. In the excitement of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug) I would call aloud upon her name, during the silence of the night, or

1. The ancient site of Thebes, in middle Egypt, on the Nile. The fascination of Egypt for romantic writers reflected the remarkable development of Egyptology

since Jean François Champollion began deciphering hieroglyphics early in the century.

among the sheltered recesses of the glens by day, as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardor of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathway she had abandoned—ah, *could* it be forever?—upon the earth.

About the commencement of the second month of the marriage, the Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden illness, from which her recovery was slow. The fever which consumed her rendered her nights uneasy; and in her perturbed state of half-slumber, she spoke of sounds, and of motions, in and about the chamber of the turret, which I concluded had no origin save in the distemper of her fancy, or perhaps in the phantasmagoric influence of the chamber itself. She became at length convalescent—finally well. Yet but a brief period elapsed, ere a second more violent disorder again threw her upon a bed of suffering; and from this attack her frame, at all times feeble, never altogether recovered. Her illnesses were, after this epoch, of alarming character, and of more alarming recurrence, defying alike the knowledge and the great exertions of her physicians. With the increase of the chronic disease which had thus, apparently, taken too sure hold upon her constitution to be eradicated by human means, I could not fail to observe a similar increase in the nervous irritation of her temperament, and in her excitability by trivial causes of fear. She spoke again, and now more frequently and pertinaciously, of the sounds—of the slight sounds—and of the unusual motions among the tapestries, to which she had formerly alluded.

One night, near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention. She had just awakened from an unquiet slumber, and I had been watching, with feelings half of anxiety, half of a vague terror, the workings of her emaciated countenance. I sat by the side of her ebony bed, upon one of the ottomans of India. She partly arose, and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she *then* heard, but which I could not hear—of motions which she *then* saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her (what, let me confess it, I could not *all* believe) that those almost inarticulate breathings, of those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. But a deadly pallor, overspreading her face, had proved to me that my exertions to reassure her would be fruitless. She appeared to be fainting, and no attendants were within call. I remembered where was deposited a decanter of light wine which had been ordered by her physicians, and hastened across the chamber to procure it. But, as I stepped beneath the light of the censer, two circumstances of a startling nature attracted my attention. I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person; and I saw that there



lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre thrown from the censer, a shadow—a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect—such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade. But I was wild with the excitement of an immoderate dose of opium, and heeded these things but little, nor spoke of them to Rowena. Having found the wine, I recrossed the chamber, and poured out a goblet-ful, which I held to the lips of the fainting lady. She had now partially recovered, however, and took the vessel herself, while I sank upon an ottoman near me, with my eyes fastened upon her person. It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle foot-fall upon the carpet, and near the couch; and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid. If this I saw—not so Rowena. She swallowed the wine unhesitatingly, and I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must, after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour.

Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby-drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife; so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb, and on the fourth, I sat alone, with her shrouded body, in that fantastic chamber which had received her as my bride.—Wild visions, opium-engendered, flitted, shadow-like, before me. I gazed with unquiet eye upon the sarcophagi in the angles of the room, upon the varying figures of the drapery, and upon the writhing of the parti-colored fires in the censer overhead. My eyes then fell, as I called to mind the circumstances of a former night, to the spot beneath the glare of the censer where I had seen the faint traces of the shadow. It was there, however, no longer; and breathing with greater freedom, I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia—and then came back upon my heart, with the turbulent violence of a flood, the whole of that unutterable woe with which I had regarded *her* thus enshrouded. The night waned; and still, with a bosom full of bitter thoughts of the one only and supremely beloved, I remained gazing upon the body of Rowena.

It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my revery.—I *felt* that it came from the bed of ebony—the bed of death. I listened in an agony of superstitious terror—but there was no repetition of the sound. I strained my vision to detect any motion in the corpse—but there was not the slightest

perceptible. Yet I could not have been deceived. I *had* heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me. I resolutely and perseveringly kept my attention riveted upon the body. Many minutes elapsed before any circumstance occurred tending to throw light upon the mystery. At length it became evident that a slight, a very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of color had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids. Through a species of unutterable horror and awe, for which the language of mortality has no sufficiently energetic expression, I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid where I sat. Yet a sense of duty finally operated to restore my self-possession. I could no longer doubt that we had been precipitate in our preparations—that Rowena still lived. It was necessary that some immediate exertion be made; yet the turret was altogether apart from the portion of the abbey tenanted by the servants—there were none within call—I had no means of summoning them to my aid without leaving the room for many minutes—and this I could not venture to do. I therefore struggled alone in my endeavors to call back the spirit still hovering. In a short period it was certain, however, that a relapse had taken place; the color disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wanness even more than that of marble; the lips became doubly shrivelled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death; a repulsive clamminess and coldness overspread rapidly the surface of the body; and all the usual rigorous stiffness immediately supervened. I fell back with a shudder upon the couch from which I had been so startlingly aroused, and again gave myself up to passionate waking visions of Ligeia.

An hour thus elapsed when (could it be possible?) I was a second time aware of some vague sound issuing from the region of the bed. I listened—in extremity of horror. The sound came again—it was a sigh. Rushing to the corpse, I saw—distinctly saw—a tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterward they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth. Amazement now struggled in my bosom with the profound awe which had hitherto reigned there alone. I felt that my vision grew dim, that my reason wandered; and it was only by a violent effort that I at length succeeded in nerving myself to the task which duty thus once more had pointed out. There was now a partial glow upon the forehead and upon the cheek and throat; a perceptible warmth pervaded the whole frame; there was even a slight pulsation at the heart. The lady *lived*; and with redoubled ardor I betook myself to the task of restoration. I chafed and bathed the temples and the hands, and used every exertion which experience, and no little medical reading, could suggest. But in vain. Suddenly, the color fled, the pulsation ceased, the lips resumed the expression of the dead, and, in an instant afterward, the whole body took upon

itself the icy chilliness, the livid hue, the intense rigidity, the sunken outline, and all the loathsome peculiarities of that which has been, for many days, a tenant of the tomb.

And again I sunk into visions of Ligeia—and again (what marvel that I shudder while I write?) *again* there reached my ears a low sob from the region of the ebony bed. But why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night? Why shall I pause to relate how, time after time, until near the period of the gray dawn, this hideous drama of revivification was repeated; how each terrific relapse was only into a sterner and apparently more irredeemable death; how each agony wore the aspect of a struggle with some invisible foe; and how each struggle was succeeded by I know not what of wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse? Let me hurry to a conclusion.

The greater part of the fearful night had worn away, and she who had been dead, once again stirred—and now more vigorously than hitherto, although arousing from a dissolution more appalling in its utter hopelessness than any. I had long ceased to struggle or to move, and remained sitting rigidly upon the ottoman, a helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotions, of which extreme awe was perhaps the least terrible, the least consuming. The corpse, I repeat, stirred, and now more vigorously than before. The hues of life flushed up with unwonted energy into the countenance—the limbs relaxed—and, save that the eyelids were yet pressed heavily together, and that the bandages and draperies of the grave still imparted their charnel character to the figure, I might have dreamed that Rowena had indeed shaken off, utterly, the fetters of Death. But if this idea was not, even then, altogether adopted, I could at least doubt no longer, when, arising from the bed, tottering, with feeble steps, with closed eyes, and with the manner of one bewildered in a dream, the thing that was enshrouded advanced boldly and palpably into the middle of the apartment.

I trembled not—I stirred not—for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanor of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralyzed—had chilled me into stone. I stirred not—but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts—a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be the *living* Rowena who confronted me? Could it indeed be Rowena *at all*—the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine? Why, *why* should I doubt it? The bandage lay heavily about the mouth—but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine? And the cheeks—there were the roses as in her noon of life—yes, these might indeed be the fair cheeks of the living Lady of Tremaine. And the chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers?—but *had she then grown taller since*

her *malady*? What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and dishevelled hair; *it was blacker than the raven wings of the midnight!* And now slowly opened *the eyes* of the figure which stood before me. "Here then, at least," I shrieked aloud, "can I never—can I never be mistaken—these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the lady—of the *LADY LIGEIA!*"

1838, 1840

## The Fall of the House of Usher

Son cœur est un luth suspendu;  
Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne.  
—DE BÉRANGER <sup>2</sup>

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power

2. Pierre Jean de Béranger, from "Le Refus" (ll. 41–42); translated, "His heart is a suspended lute; Whenever one touches it, it resounds." Cf. "Israfel."

lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him—and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the

estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher"—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment—that of looking down within the tarn—had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the *studio* of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the

carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebony blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy—while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this—I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé*<sup>3</sup> man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the man being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable.<sup>4</sup> A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity;—these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be for-

3. Bored.

4. Hervey Allen wrote: "The description

of Roderick Usher is the most perfect pen-portrait of Poe himself."

gotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced<sup>5</sup> from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—that leaden, self-balanced, and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable cater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms and the general manner of their narration had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish," said he, "I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger,

5. Poe, like many intelligent contemporaries, trusted the phrenological deduc-

tion of character from external characteristics.



except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved, in this pitiable, condition I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.”

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would leave him (him, the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.” While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread; and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother; but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either

Usher or myself; and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together, or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber.<sup>6</sup> From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why—from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavor to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least, in the circumstances then surrounding me, there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.<sup>7</sup>

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inap-

6. Karl Maria Von Weber (1786–1826), pioneer of German romantic opera, did not compose “The Last Waltz of Von Weber.” It was one of the *Dances Bril-liantes* (1822) by Karl Gottlieb Reissiger (1798–1859).

7. Swiss-born Johann Heinrich Füssli (1742–1825). As Henry Fuseli he became, in London, a romantic impressionist and illustrator of Shakespeare and Milton.

propriate splendor.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid *facility* of his *impromptus* could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace,"<sup>8</sup> ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:—

I.

In the greenest of our valleys,  
By good angels tenanted,  
Once a fair and stately palace—  
Radiant palace—reared its head.  
In the monarch Thought's dominion—  
It stood there!  
Never seraph spread a pinion  
Over fabric half so fair.

II.

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,  
On its roof did float and flow  
(This—all this—was in the olden  
Time long ago);  
And every gentle air that dallied,  
In that sweet day,  
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,  
A winged odor went away.

III.

Wanderers in that happy valley  
Through two luminous windows saw  
Spirits moving musically  
To a lute's well-tuned law;  
Round about a throne, where sitting

8. This poem was published in the *Baltimore Museum* for April, 1839, five months before it appeared as part of the present story.

(Porphyrogenel!)<sup>9</sup>  
 In state his glory well befitting,  
 The ruler of the realm was seen.

## IV.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing  
 Was the fair palace door,  
 Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing  
 And sparkling evermore,  
 A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty  
 Was but to sing,  
 In voices of surpassing beauty,  
 The wit and wisdom of their king.

## V.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,  
 Assailed the monarch's high estate;  
 (Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow  
 Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)  
 And, round about his home, the glory  
 That blushed and bloomed  
 Is but a dim-remembered story  
 Of the old time entombed.

## VI.

And travellers now within that valley,  
 Through the red-litten windows see  
 Vast forms that move fantastically  
 To a discordant melody;  
 While, like a rapid ghastly river,  
 Through the pale door,  
 A hideous throng rush out forever,  
 And laugh—but smile no more.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad led us into a train of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention not so much on account of its novelty (for other men<sup>1</sup> have thought thus), as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The

9. A Greek derivative; "born to the purple"—a mark of royalty.

1. "Watson, Dr. Percival, Spallanzani,

and especially the Bishop of Llandaff.—See 'Chemical Essays,' vol. v" [Poe's note].

conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many *fungi* which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience—was to be seen, he said (and I here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books<sup>2</sup>—the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the *Vervet et Chartreuse* of Gresset; the *Belphegor* of Machiavelli; the *Heaven and Hell* of Swedenborg; the *Subterranean Voyage* of Nicholas Klimm of Holberg; the *Chiro-mancy* of Robert Flud, of Jean D'Indaginé, and of *De la Chambre*; the *Journey into the Blue Distance* of Tieck; and the *City of the Sun* of Campanella. One favorite volume was a small octavo edition of the *Directorium Inquisitorium*, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrs and Ægipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic—the manual of a forgotten church—the *Vigiliæ Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiæ Maguntinæ*.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight (previously to its final interment), in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of

2. Usher's library is occult and fantastically learned, suggesting his own state of mind and foreshadowing the later burial and resurrection of his sister, Madeline. *Vert-Vert* and *Chartreuse*, by Jean Baptiste Gresset (1709–1777), are lusty, anticlerical satires; in the novel of Machiavelli (1469–1527), an infernal demon visits the earth to prove

that women are the damnation of men; in *Heaven and Hell* (1758), the mystical scientist Swedenborg argues the continuity of spiritual identity; while the following title, by Ludwig Holberg (1684–1754) again suggests a round trip into the world of death. The next three writers are exponents of chiro-mancy, or occult divination by palm-

her medical men,<sup>3</sup> and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp, grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apart-

istry: Robert Flud (1574–1637), British Rosicrucian and pseudoscientist; and two Frenchmen—Jean D'Indagine (*Chiromantia*, 1522) and Marin Cureau de la Chambre (*Principes de la Chiromancie*, 1653). The next two titles again suggest the journey to another world. Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), a German poet, did not, however, publish a work of the title here attributed to him; the book by Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), Italian philosopher, describes an ideal other world. *Inquisitorium Directorium* was an account of procedures and tor-

tures, by Nicolas Eymeric de Gironne (ca. 1320–1399), once inquisitor-general for Castile. Pomponius Mela was a Roman of the first century A.D., but his *Geography*, when printed at Milan in 1471, was still given credence for such wonders as the "Ægipans," reputed goat-men of Africa. The last title, translated as *The Vigils of the Dead* \* \* \*, has not been identified; but there were many such titles in the Middle Ages.

3. The stealing of the bodies of the dead for medical students and scientists was then a common practice.

ments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue—but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was laboring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavored to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognized it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was,

as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes—an evidently restrained *hysteria* in his whole demeanor. His air appalled me—but any thing was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

“And you have not seen it?” he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.” Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this—yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars, nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

“You must not—you shall not behold this!” said I, shuddering, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. “These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement;—the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favorite romances. I will read, and you shall listen:—and so we will pass away this terrible night together.”

The antique volume which I had taken up was the “*Mad Trist*” of Sir Launcelot Canning;<sup>4</sup> but I had called it a favorite of Usher’s more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with

4. Not identified; possibly Poe invented the book and the author for his purpose.



which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

“And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and malicious turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarumed and reverberated throughout the forest.”

At the termination of this sentence I started and, for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)—it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

“But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the malicious hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanor, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten—

Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin;

Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win.

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard.”

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amaze-

ment—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanor. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast—yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea—for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:

“And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound.”

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled, reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

“Now hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I

dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her feeble first movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I *dared not speak!* And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangor of the shield—say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh! whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!"—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—"MADMAN! I TELL YOU THAT SHE NOW STANDS WITHOUT THE DOOR!"

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonics, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters<sup>5</sup>—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the HOUSE OF USHER.

1839, 1840

5. Cf. Ezekiel xliii: 2: "[God's] voice was like a noise of many waters."

The Purloined Letter<sup>1</sup>*Nil sapientia odiosius acumine nimio.<sup>2</sup>*

—SENECA

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschäum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library, or book-closet, *au troisième*,<sup>3</sup> No. 33, *Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain*. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt.<sup>4</sup> I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G.'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he

1. The centennial of the detective story was spontaneously recognized in 1941, when a number of American and British periodicals published articles and special numbers acknowledging Poe's invention of the form. The first such story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," appeared in *Graham's Magazine* in April, 1841. It contained all the ingredients, now classic, of this fiction: the crime unusually violent or malicious; the blundering police official reluctantly co-operating with the unofficial detective; the impossible conditions, such as the room here completely locked from the inside; the cool courage and flawless deduction of the detective; the surprising application of well-known facts or scientific data; the clue "hidden" in the obvious place or the "insignificant" detail; and the innocent suspect dramatically saved from unjust punishment. These ingredients Poe employed variously in a number of detective stories. In science

fiction, of which he was also the pioneer, he employed similar deductive processes, as well as his characteristic elements of shock or horror.

Written early in 1844, a shorter version of the present story appeared in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* for November of that year, whether with Poe's consent is not known. In his *Tales* of 1845 he used the present text, which was first published in *The Gift* (1845). A. H. Quinn terms this narrative, of the three in which Dupin appears, "the most unified of the stories of ratiocination." One device which sets it apart from those of Poe's imitators is that his detective solves the case on the basis of what he knows of the *character* of the Minister D—.

2. "Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than too much subtlety."

3. In a French dwelling, the fourth floor.

4. The first and second murders solved by Dupin in Poe's fiction.

forebore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling every thing "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?"

"Oh no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd*."

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you *do* talk!" replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little *too* self-evident."

"Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!"—roared our visitor, profoundly amused, "oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what, after all, is the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing *out* of the robber's possession;—that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end

to employ it."

"Be a little more explicit," I said.

"Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

"Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

"No? Well; the disclosure of the document to a third person who shall be nameless would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized."

"But this ascendancy," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare——"

"The thief," said G——, "is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage who stood at her elbow. The Minister decamped; leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this,

of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the Minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G——; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the Minister's hôtel;<sup>5</sup> and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design."

"But," said I, "you are quite *au fait*<sup>6</sup> in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"Oh yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the Minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hôtel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in the possession of the Minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being *destroyed*," said Dupin.

5. Town house.

6. Skilled, expert.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the Minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin. "D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course."

"Not *altogether* a fool," said G——, "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why the fact is, we took our time, and we searched *every where*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is so plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—a space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bed-posts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?"



"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hôtel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope.<sup>7</sup> Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the glueing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bed-clothes, as well as the curtains and carpets."

"That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

"You include the *grounds* about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-cover, with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

7. Probably a hand magnifying glass with a powerful lens. The term "microscope" long continued to be used for

this instrument as well as for the compound microscope now used in scientific researches.

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough re-search of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G——. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the Hôtel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh yes!"—And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said,—

"Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as over-reaching the Minister?"

"Confound him, say I—yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be."

"How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin.

"Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward—I don't like to say how much, precisely; but one thing I *will* say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual cheque for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done."

"Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, "I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?"

"How?—in what way?"

"Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?—puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?"

"No; hang Abernethy!"

"To be sure! hang him and welcome. But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case

to his physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

"'We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would you have directed him to take?'"

"'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take *advice*, to be sure.'"

"But," said the Prefect, a little discomposed, "I am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter."

"In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a cheque-book, "you may as well fill me up a cheque for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunder-stricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a cheque for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an *escritoire*,<sup>8</sup> took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the cheque.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hôtel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

"So far as his labors extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed,<sup>9</sup> to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or

8. Writing desk.

9. Procrustes was a legendary Greek robber who bound his victims to a

bed. If too short, they were stretched to fit it; if too long, parts of their legs were cut off.

too shallow, for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, 'are they even or odd?' Our schoolboy replies, 'odd,' and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'the simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd';—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: 'This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even';—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom his fellows termed 'lucky,'—what, in its last analysis, is it?"

"It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

"It is," said Dupin; "and, upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucauld, to La Bougive, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin; "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather

through non-admeasurement of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass*; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice*, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D—, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration of *the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of motions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such *recherchés*<sup>1</sup> nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude,—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail? You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden any where within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets; this the Prefect *feels*; and he is merely

1. Choice, studied.

guilty of a *non distributio mediæ*<sup>2</sup> in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

"But is this really the poet?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister I believe has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet."

"You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect."

"You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as the reason *par excellence*."

"*'Il y a à parier,'*" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "*'que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre.'*"<sup>3</sup> The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra' about as much as, in Latin, '*ambitus*' implies 'ambition,' '*religio*' 'religion,' or '*homines honesti*' a set of *honorable* men."<sup>4</sup>

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value, of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra, are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *untrue* that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails.

2. "Undistributed middle," as in a syllogism, which will lead to a false conclusion.

3. "The odds are that every idea which is widely accepted, every received convention, is a stupidity, since it is

suitable to the masses."

4. Dupin's point is that a word's original meaning is not necessarily indicated by others which may have derived from it.

In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned ‘Mythology,’ mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that ‘although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.’ With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the ‘Pagan fables’ *are* believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that  $x^2 + px$  was absolutely and unconditionally equal to  $q$ . Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where  $x^2 + px$  is *not* altogether equal to  $q$ , and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavor to knock you down.

“I mean to say,” continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, “that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold *intrigant*.<sup>5</sup> Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as *ruses*, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead

5. Schemer.

him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hôtel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so very self-evident."

"Yes," said I, "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with the very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiae*,<sup>6</sup> for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent *momentum* is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs, over the shop doors, are the most attractive of attention?"

"I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

"There is a game of puzzles," he resumed, "which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best



preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

"But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D——; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand*, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

"Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial hôtel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*.<sup>7</sup> He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

"To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

"I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantel-piece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless, had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D—— cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D——, the Minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the upper divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter, than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D—— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S—— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, was diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain

royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But, then, the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D——, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document;—these things, together with the hyperobtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

“I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister, on a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed. I bade the Minister good morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

“The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a *fac-simile* (so far as regards externals), which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings; imitating the D—— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread.

“The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended luna-

tic was a man in my own pay."

"But what purpose had you," I asked, "in replacing the letter by a *fac-simile*? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly, and departed?"

"D——," replied Dupin, "is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hôtel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter, I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni*;<sup>8</sup> but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum*,<sup>9</sup> an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms 'a certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

"How? did you put any thing particular in it?"

"Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words—

—Un dessein si funeste,  
S'il n'est digne d' Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

They are to be found in Crébillon's 'Atrée.'"<sup>1</sup>

1844

1844, 1845

8. "The easy descent to Avernus [Hell]." Poe misquotes slightly from Virgil's *Aeneid*, VI, 126.  
9. Horrible monster.

1. "A design so deadly, even if not worthy of Atræus, is worthy of Thyestes." The quotation is from an eighteenth-century tragedy by the French

dramatist Crébillon (pseudonym for Prosper Jolyot). The reference is to King Atræus of Mycenæ, who murdered his nephews and served them to their father Thyestes at a feast. Thyestes had seduced the wife of Atræus and laid a curse on his house.

A Descent into the Maelström<sup>2</sup>

The ways of God in Nature, as in Providence, are not as *our* ways; nor are the models that we frame any way commensurate to the vastness, profundity, and unsearchableness of His works, *which have a depth in them greater than the well of Democritus.*

—JOSEPH GLANVILL <sup>3</sup>

We had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a very old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this "little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to within half-a-dozen yards of its brink. In truth, so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds.

2. An example of Poe's direct use of his knowledge of science in the plot and action of an exciting story. Scientific and pseudoscientific lore had been employed since the beginning of modern fiction with Defoe. Use of it was intensified by the Gothic novelists of the eighteenth century, whose emphasis on the occult influenced Poe in such tales as "Ligeia." But in the present story, as in his early "MS. Found in a Bottle," Poe intensifies the effect by making the scientific facts intrinsic to the action. In this sense he is the forerunner of the science fiction of today. Actually, his interest in science appears in all varieties of his fiction—accessory to the solution of a mystery in such stories as "The Gold Bug" or "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," implemented with psycho-

logical analysis in stories such as "The Pit and the Pendulum." The rational methods of science underlie his own fictional techniques as well as the methods of detection employed in his detective stories. *Eureka*, the last work of his life, was an effort to reconcile the laws of physics with metaphysical reality. "A Descent into the Maelström" first appeared in *Graham's Magazine* for May, 1841, and was collected in the *Tales* (1845).

3. For Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680) see epigraph to "Ligeia." The motto is quoted, with slight changes, from Glanvill's *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (London, 1676). Democritus is credited with the idea that Truth is to be found at the bottom of a deep well.

It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance.

"You must get over these fancies," said the guide, "for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye.

"We are now," he continued in that particularizing manner which distinguished him—"we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland—and in the dreary district of Lofoden.<sup>4</sup> The mountain upon whose top we sit is Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapour beneath us, into the sea."

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the *Mare Tenebrarum*.<sup>5</sup> A panorama more desolately desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking for ever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore, had something very unusual about it. Although at the time so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

4. The Lofoten Islands are, as Poe suggests, a cluster off the coast of north-west Norway, at latitude 68 degrees N. The maelström also is actual. In the narrow strait between Moskenesøy and Vaerøy (Poe's "Moskoe" and "Vurrgh") the rapid fall of an unusually large tide causes currents and whirlpools which became proverbial for destruction in the days of small vessels. Poe of course exaggerates the whirlpool

for the effects of his story; but the report of conical vortices in the ocean was still regarded as likely, and was supported by the folklore of the sea.

5. Sea of darkness; the unexplored outer Atlantic as sometimes designated on ancient maps. The "Nubian geographer" was probably Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy) of Alexandria, in the second century A.D., founder of the Ptolemaic system of geography and astronomy.

"The island in the distance," resumed the old man, "is called by the Norwegians Vurrgh. The one midway is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is Ambaaren. Yonder are Iflesen, Hocymholm, Kieldholm, Suarven, and Buckholm. Farther off—between Moskoe and Vurrgh—are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, and Skarholm. These are the true names of the places—but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?"

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea as far as Vurrgh was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing,—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools one by one disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the wind an appalling voice, half-shriek, half-roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an

excess of nervous agitation.

"This," said I at length, to the old man—"this *can* be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström."

"So it is sometimes termed," said he. "We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-ström, from the island of Moskoe in the midway."

The ordinary accounts of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I saw. That of Jonas Ramus,<sup>6</sup> which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence, or of the horror of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of *the novel* which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of his description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

"Between Lofoden and Moskoe," he says, "the depth of the water is between thirty-five and forty fathoms; but on the other side, toward Ver (Vurrgh) this depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel, without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a boisterous rapidity, but the roar of its impetuous cbb to the sea is scarce equalled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts—the noise being heard several leagues off, and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom and there beat to pieces against the rocks, and when the water relaxes the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the cbb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile<sup>7</sup> of it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were within its reach. It likewise happens frequently that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence, and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among

6. Identified as the writer on this subject whom he quoted below, with variations, from the current *Encyclopædia*

*Britannica* (Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe*, pp. 312–313).

7. About four and a half English miles.

which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday,<sup>8</sup> it raged with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground.”

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The “forty fathoms” must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the shore either of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the centre of the Moskoe-ström must be immeasurably greater; and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon the howling Phlegethon<sup>9</sup> below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears; for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing that the largest ship of the line in existence coming within the influence of that deadly attraction could resist it as little as a feather the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which I remember seemed to me sufficiently plausible in perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Ferroe Islands, “have no other cause than the collision of waves rising and falling at flux and reflux against a ridge of rocks and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher the flood rises the deeper must the fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments.”—These are the words of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Kircher<sup>1</sup> and others imagine that in the centre of the channel of the Maelström is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, mentioning it to the guide, I was rather surprised to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As to the former notion he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it becomes altogether unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

“You have had a good look at the whirl now,” said the old man,

8. The second Sunday before Lent.  
9. In Greek myth, a river in Hades, flowing with fire instead of water.

1. Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680), German Jesuit scholar and early archaeologist.



“and if you will creep round this crag so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the Moskoe-ström.”

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

“Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about seventy tons burthen, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurrgh. In all violent eddies at sea there is good fishing at proper opportunities if one has only the courage to attempt it, but among the whole of the Lofoden coastmen, we three were the only ones who made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the southward. There fish can be got at all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but in far greater abundance, so that we often got in a single day what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labour, and courage answering for capital.

“We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this; and it was our practice, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen minutes’ slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool, and then drop down upon anchorage somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflæsen, where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until nearly time for slack-water again, when we weighed and made for home. We never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we seldom made a miscalculation upon this point. Twice during six years we were forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which is a rare thing indeed just about here; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week, starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our arrival, and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should have been driven out to sea in spite of everything (for the whirlpools threw us round and round so violently that at length we fouled our anchor and dragged it) if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross currents—here to-day and gone to-morrow—which drove us under the lee of Flåmen, where, by good luck, we brought up.

“I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered ‘on the grounds’—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we made shift always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-ström itself without accident; although at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so

behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great assistance at such times in using the sweeps, as well as afterward in fishing, but somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves we had not the heart to let the young ones get into the danger—for, after all is said and done, it was a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

"It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the tenth day of July 18—, a day which the people of this part of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens; and yet all the morning, and indeed until late in the afternoon, there was a gentle and steady breeze from the southwest, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not have foreseen what was to follow.

"The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about 2 o'clock P.M., and had soon nearly loaded the smack with fine fish, which, we all remarked, were more plentiful that day than we had ever known them. It was just seven *by my watch* when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of the Ström at slack water, which we knew would be at eight.

"We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze from over Helseggen. This was most unusual—something that had never happened to us before—and I began to feel a little uneasy without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway at all for the eddies, and I was just upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage, when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-coloured cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

"In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away, and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however, did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute the storm was upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast—and what with this and the driving spray it became suddenly so dark that we could not see each other in the smack.

"Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seaman in Norway never experienced anything like it. We had let our sails go by the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by the board as if they had been sawed

off—the mainmast taking with it my youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

“Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Ström by way of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at once—for we lay entirely buried for some moments. How my elder brother escaped destruction I cannot say, for I never had an opportunity of ascertaining. For my part, as soon as I had let the foresail run, I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the bow, and with my hands grasping a ring-bolt near the foot of the fore-mast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

“For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming out of the water, and thus rid herself in some measure of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he was overboard—but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror—for he put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word ‘*Moskoe-ström!*’

“No one ever will know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from head to foot, as if I had had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew what he wished to make me understand. With the wind that now drove us on we were bound for the whirl of the Ström, and nothing could save us!

“You perceive that in crossing the Ström *channel*, we always went a long way up above the whirl, even in the calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and in such a hurricane as this! ‘To be sure,’ I thought, ‘we shall get there just about the slack—there is some little hope in that’—but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that we were doomed had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

“By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did not feel it so much as we scudded before it, but at all events the seas, which at first had been kept down by the wind and

lay flat and frothing, now got up into absolute mountains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw, and of a deep bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a lustre that I never before knew her to wear. She lit up everything about us with the greatest distinctness—but, O God, what a scene it was to light up!

“I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother—but, in some manner which I could not understand, the din had so increased that I could not make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his fingers as if to say ‘listen!’

“At first I could not make out what he meant—but soon a hideous thought flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at its face by the moonlight, and then burst into tears as I flung it far away into the ocean. *It had run down at seven o'clock! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Ström was in full fury!*

“When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—which appears very strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding*, in sea-phrases.

“Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly, but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge, that made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lotty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the every-day Moskoe-ström, than the whirl as you now see it is like a mill-race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognised the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

“It could not have been more than two minutes afterward until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the waste-pipes of many thousand steam-vessels letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the

whirl; and I thought of course that another moment would plunge us into the abyss—down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

“It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a good deal of that terror which unmanned me at first. I suppose it was despair that strung my nerves.

“It may look like boasting—but what I tell you is truth—I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own individual life in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God’s power. I do believe that I blushed with shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a *wish* to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man’s mind in such extremity, and I have often thought since that the revolutions of the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

“There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession, and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present situation—for, as you saw yourself, the belt of such is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black, mountainous ridge. If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale you can form no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these annoyances—just as death-condemned felons in prison are allowed petty indulgences, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

“How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask which had been securely lashed under the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us.

As we approached the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavoured to force my hands, as it was not large enough to afford us both a secure grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all, so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. This there was no great difficulty in doing, for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even keel, only swaying to and fro with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position when we gave a wild lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

“As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel, and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them, while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage, and looked once again upon the scene.

“Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

“At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little, however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation than if we had been upon a dead level, and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

"The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmen say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist or spray was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel as they all met together at the bottom, but the yell that went up to the Heavens from out of that mist I dare not attempt to describe.

"Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried us a great distance down the slope, but our farther descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement—but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us some times only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward at each revolution was slow but very perceptible.

"Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of the whirl. Both above and below us were visible fragments of vessels, large masses of building timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such as pieces of house furniture, broken boxes, barrels, and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I *must* have been delirious, for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. 'This fir-tree,' I found myself at one time saying, 'will certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears,'—and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook it and went down before. At length, after making several guesses of this nature, and being deceived in all, this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculation—set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs again tremble, and my heart beat heavily once more.

"It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory, and partly from present observation. I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewed the coast of Lofoden, having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoe-ström. By far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary way—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by supposing that the roughened

fragments were the only ones which had been *completely absorbed*—that the others had entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, for some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or of the ebb, as the case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those which had been drawn in more early, or absorbed more rapidly. I made also three important observations. The first was that, as a general rule, the larger the bodies were the more rapid their descent; the second, that, between two masses of equal extent, the one spherical and the other of *any other shape*, the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere; the third, that, between two masses of equal size, the one cylindrical and the other of any other shape, the cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since my escape I have had several conversations on this subject with an old schoolmaster of the district, and it was from him that I learned the use of the words ‘cylinder’ and ‘sphere.’ He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I observed was in fact the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments, and showed me how it happened that a cylinder swimming in a vortex offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty than an equally bulky body of any form whatever.<sup>2</sup>

“There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing these observations and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that at every revolution we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things which had been on our level when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool were now high up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

“I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water-cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother’s attention by signs, pointed to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design, but whether this was the case or not, he shook his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was impossible to reach him, the emergency admitted of no delay, and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and precipitated myself with it into the sea without another

2. “See Archimedes, *De Incidentibus in Fluido*, lib. 2” [Poe’s note]. The title is translated, “Concerning the falling into [*i.e.*, floating in] liquids.” Archimedes

(287?–212 B.C.) was the Greek physicist who first discovered the relations between the displacement of fluid and levitation or buoyancy.



moment's hesitation.

"The result was precisely what I had hoped it might be. As it is myself who now tell you this tale—as you see that I *did* escape—and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have further to say, I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour or thereabout after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong at once and for ever into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momentarily less and less sharp. The gyrations of the whirl grew gradually less and less violent. By degrees the froth and the rainbow disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-ström *had been*. It was the hour of the slack—but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Ström, and in a few minutes was hurried down the coast into the 'grounds' of the fishermen. A boat picked me up, exhausted from fatigue and (now that the danger was removed) speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew me on board were my old mates and daily companions, but they knew me no more than they would have known a traveller from the spirit-land. My hair, which had been raven-black the day before, was as white as you see it now. They say, too, that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to you, and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden."

1841, 1845

### The Cask of Amontillado<sup>3</sup>

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so

3. Originally published in *Godey's Lady's Book* for November, 1846, this story was first collected by Griswold in his edition of Poe's *Works* (1850). It is one of those later stories, written from 1841 on, in which Poe best exemplifies the principles of concentration and

thematic totality which he enounced in 1842, in his review (reprinted in this volume) of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. It also illustrates his best command of dialogue, social situation, and the swift dramatic climax.

well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionnaires*. In painting and gemmary Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe<sup>4</sup> of what passes for Amontillado,<sup>5</sup> and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me——"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

4. A French derivative; in England and the United States a large cask with the volume of two hogsheads.

5. A pale, dry sherry, much esteemed, originating in Montilla, Spain.

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi——"

"I have no engagement;—come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a *roquelaire*<sup>6</sup> closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe?" said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned toward me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is

6. A short cloak.

precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi——”

“Enough,” he said; “the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.”

“True—true,” I replied; “and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily; but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc<sup>7</sup> will defend us from the damps.”

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

“Drink,” I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

“I drink,” he said, “to the buried that repose around us.”

“And I to your long life.”

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

“These vaults,” he said, “are extensive.”

“The Montresors,” I replied, “were a great and numerous family.”

“I forget your arms.”

“A huge human foot d’or, in a field azure;<sup>8</sup> the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.”

“And the motto?”

“*Nemo me impune lacessit.*”<sup>9</sup>

“Good!” he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

“The nitre!” I said; “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough——”

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.”

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grâve.<sup>1</sup> He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

7. Correctly, “Médoc,” a claret from the Médoc, near Bordeaux, France. Except for the varieties branded by certain vineyards, however, it is not a connoisseur’s wine.

8. The coat of arms bore a golden foot on an azure field. “Rampant,” in the following sentence, means “rearing up.”

Fortunato intended an insult in pretending to forget the coat of arms.

9. “No one attacks me with impunity.” This is the legend of the royal arms of Scotland.

1. Correctly, “Grâves,” a light wine from the Bordeaux area.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

“You do not comprehend?” he said.

“Not I,” I replied.

“Then you are not of the brotherhood.”

“How?”

“You are not of the masons.”<sup>2</sup>

“Yes, yes,” I said; “yes, yes.”

“You? Impossible! A mason?”

“A mason,” I replied.

“A sign,” he said.

“It is this,” I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire*.

“You jest,” he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. “But let us proceed to the Amontillado.”

“Be it so,” I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris.<sup>3</sup> Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi——”

“He is an ignoramus,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment

2. Properly, “Masons”; an allusion to the secret society of Freemasons. The trowel, ironically shown by Montresor, is a symbol of their supposed origin as a guild of stoneworkers.

3. Like the earlier catacombs of Italy, those of Paris were subterranean galleries with recessed niches for burial vaults.

more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamor grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the

niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

"Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montresor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again:

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*<sup>4</sup>

1846, 1850

## From Twice-Told Tales, By Nathaniel Hawthorne<sup>6</sup>

### A Review

\* \* \*

But it is of his tales that we desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in our opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were we bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, we should answer, without hesitation—in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order

4. May he rest in peace!

6. This is one of Poe's most important critical articles. In the fourth paragraph (the second paragraph of our selection) begins the famous formulation of the short story as a literary *genre*, which Poe was the first to define, and was already illustrating in his own stories, at

the height of his maturity. Apart from this, of course, the essay is one of Poe's most characteristic critiques. It first appeared in *Graham's Magazine* for May, 1842, although Poe had printed a brief notice of five paragraphs in the April issue (see his opening sentence).

of true poetry exist. We need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem *too* brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression. Without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration or repetition of purpose—the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger<sup>8</sup> has wrought brilliant things—pungent and spirit-stirring—but, like all immassive bodies, they lack *momentum*, and thus fail to satisfy the Poetic Sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*<sup>9</sup>

Were we called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as we have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—we should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not

8. Cf. "Israfel" and the epigraph to "The Fall of the House of Usher" for other references to Pierre Jean de Béranger (1780–1857), French lyric poet.

9. "You travel most safely in the mid-

dle [moderate] course": Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*; the advice of Helios to his son Phaëthon, who insists on driving the chariot of the sun for a day, and nearly burns up the earth by neglecting his father's injunction.



fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a table-land of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression—the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic, or the humorous—which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added here, *par parenthèse*,<sup>1</sup> that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at a great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those *tales of effect*, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of *Blackwood*.<sup>2</sup> The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius: although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that the

1. Parenthetically.

2. The *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* (1817), soon simply called *Blackwood's Magazine*, was noted from the begin-

ning for fiction creating the mood of "terror, or passion, or horror" that Poe here associates with "effect."

design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit—we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of *The Tales of a Traveller* of Washington Irving, and these *Twice-Told Tales* of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal<sup>3</sup> abound in vigor and originality; but, in general, his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British Magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's tales we should say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of Art—an Art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent *cliques* which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these *Twice-Told Tales*. As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of the originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of *tone* as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original at *all* points. \* \* \*

1842, 1894

## The Philosophy of Composition<sup>6</sup>

Charles Dickens, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of *Barnaby Rudge*,<sup>7</sup> says—"By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his *Caleb Wil-*

3. John Neal (1793-1876), voluminous American writer and journalist, had been a *Blackwood's* author.

6. This essay has survived endless discussions as to whether Poe actually composed "The Raven" in the manner described. It retains its fascination and its usefulness because it convincingly shows what elements, somehow or other, went into "The Raven," and what processes, at one time or another, occurred in the creative mind of the author during the four years in which he repeatedly

returned to this work. If, in the limited scope of a lecture (for which the paper was probably intended), Poe distorted the time sequence or foreshortened the perspective of ideas concerned in the process, the critical truth of his "best specimen of analysis," as he called it, is not diminished. He was concerned to demonstrate that a poem, like any other work of art, is fabricated of materials selected for consciously determined purposes; that these plastic potentials are shaped by the creative intelligence to

liams backward?<sup>8</sup> He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens's idea—but the author of *Caleb Williams* was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement*<sup>9</sup> before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or aural [sic] comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone—whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never

make them most useful in communicating the intended effect or idea. This concept, in accord with his theory of creation, which he believed valid for fiction as well as for poetry, was directly opposed to the romantic assumption that the artist is himself an instrument responding intuitively to pressures of inspiration. Thus the essay is a source of information concerning Poe's theories and practice, while providing, at the same time, a model of analytical criti-

cism. It was first published in *Graham's Magazine* for April, 1846.

7. In 1841, while Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* was appearing serially, Poe wrote a review in which he succeeded in naming the murderer, still supposedly shrouded in mystery.

8. See Godwin's Preface to *Caleb Williams* (1794) for confirmation.

9. Literally, the "untying"; hence, the "solution" of a fictional plot.

been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but, perhaps, the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders and demon-traps—the cock's feathers, the red paint, and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrion*.<sup>1</sup>

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor at any time the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analyzed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi*<sup>2</sup> by which some one of my own works was put together. I select *The Raven*, as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referrible either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*, the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris paribus*,<sup>3</sup> no poet can afford to dispense with *any thing* that may ad-

1. Actor.

2. Method of performance.

3. Other things being equal.

vance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal<sup>4</sup> necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one half of the *Paradise Lost* is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably*, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity, of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as *Robinson Crusoe* (demanding no unity) this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—again in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect:—this, with one proviso—that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed; and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul*—*not* of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating

4. Psychological.

"the beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from any thing here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the *application* of the refrain—the refrain itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature*

of my refrain. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence, would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best refrain.

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. Having made up my mind to a refrain, the division of the poem into stanzas was, of course, a corollary: the refrain forming the close of each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt; and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the refrain being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "Nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non-reasoning* creature capable of speech; and, very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven, as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven—the bird of ill omen—monotonously repeating the one word, "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" "Death"—was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer, here also, is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*." The death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.

I had now to combine the two ideas, of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress, and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying, at every turn, the *application* of the word repeated; but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending—that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application*. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one—the second less so—the third still less, and so on—until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself—by its frequent repetition—and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it—is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote) but because he experiences a phrenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the *expected* "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me—or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction—I first established in mind the climax, or concluding query—that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer—that in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning—at the end, where all works of art should begin—for it was here, at this point of my preconsiderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!  
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if within the distant Aidenn,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."  
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first, that by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover; and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the meter, and the length



and general arrangement of the stanza,—as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able, in the subsequent composition, to construct more vigorous stanzas, I should, without scruple, have purposely enfeebled them, so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected, in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm*, it is still clear that the possible varieties of meter and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, *for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing*. The fact is, that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course, I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or meter of *The Raven*. The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically—the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short: the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet—the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds)—the third of eight—the fourth of seven and a half—the fifth the same—the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines, taken individually, has been employed before; and what originality *The Raven* has, is in their *combination into stanza*; nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual, and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident:—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty,

as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window, was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a “tapping” at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader’s curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover’s throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven’s seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, *Pallas*, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven’s entrance. He comes in “with many a flirt and flutter.”

Not the *least obeisance made he*—not a moment stopped or stayed  
he,

*But with mien of lord or lady*, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:—

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling  
By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore*,  
“Though thy *crest be shorn and shaven* thou,” I said, “art sure no  
craven,

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore?”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so plainly  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
*Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,*  
With such name as “Nevermore.”

The effect of the *dénouement* being thus provided for, I imme-

diately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness—this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanor. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *dénouement*—which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *dénouement* proper—with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, every thing is within the limits of the accountable—of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanor, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"—a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, how-

ever indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal*. It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The undercurrent of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines—

“Take thy beak from out *my heart*, and take thy form from off my door!”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore!”

It will be observed that the words, “from out my heart,” involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, “Nevermore,” dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,  
On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,  
And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore.

1846

## HERMAN MELVILLE

(1819–1891)

Melville’s parents were both of substantial New York families, but his father’s bankruptcy, soon followed by his death, left the mother in financial difficulties when the boy was only twelve. She then settled near Albany, where Melville for a time attended the local academy. Following a brief career as a clerk in his brother’s store and in a bank,

he went to sea at the age of nineteen. His experiences as a merchant sailor on the *St. Lawrence* and ashore in the slums of Liverpool, later recalled in *Redburn*, awakened the abhorrence, expressed throughout his fiction, of the darkness of man’s deeds, and the evil seemingly inherent in nature itself. After this first brief seafaring interlude, he taught

school and began to write sporadically.

In 1841, he shipped once more before the mast, aboard a Fair Haven whaler, the *Acushnet*, bound for the Pacific. Altogether, it was nearly four years before he returned from the South Seas. After eighteen months he deserted the whaler, in company with a close friend, at Nukuhiva, in the Marquesas Islands. In *Typee*, these adventures are embellished by fictional license, but the author and "Toby" Green certainly spent at least a month among the handsome Marquesan Taipis, whose free and idyllic island life was flawed by their regrettable habit of eating their enemies. A passing whaler provided an "escape" to Tahiti. Melville soon shipped on another whaler, *Charles and Henry* of Nantucket which carried him finally to the Hawaiian Islands. In Honolulu he enlisted for naval service, aboard the U.S.S. *United States*, and was discharged fourteen months later at Boston.

The youth had had a compelling personal experience, and being a natural writer, he at once set to work producing a fiction based in part on his own adventures, employing literary materials which he was the first American writer to exploit. *Typee* (London and New York, 1846) was the first modern novel of South Seas adventure, as the later *Moby-Dick* was the first literary classic of whaling. Indeed, Melville wrote little of significance that was not suggested by his experiences prior to his discharge from the Navy. His impulsive literary energies drove him steadily for eleven years, dur-

ing which he was the author of ten major volumes; then his fiction writing suddenly ceased, and his life fell into seeming confusion, producing an enigma endlessly intriguing to his critics.

In the beginning he was almost embarrassed by success. *Typee* was at once recognized for the merits which have made it a classic, but its author was notoriously identified as the character who had lived and eaten with cannibals, and loved the dusky Fayaway—an uncomfortable position for a young New Yorker just married to the daughter of a Boston chief justice. *Omoo* (1847), somewhat inferior to *Typee*, was also a successful novel of Pacific adventures. *Mardi* (1849) began to puzzle a public impatient of symbolic enigmas; but *Redburn* (1849) and *White-Jacket* (1850) were novels of exciting adventure, although the first, as has been suggested above, devotes much of its energy to sociological satire, while the second emphasizes the floggings and other cruelties and degradations then imposed upon enlisted men of the United States Navy.

In 1851, Melville's masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*, was published. A robust and realistic novel of adventure, drawing upon the author's fascination with the whale and whaling, it achieves a compelling symbolism in the character of Captain Ahab, whose monomaniacal fury against the whale, or the evil it represents to him, sends him to his death. This book is now seen as one of a trilogy, including the earlier *Mardi*, and *Pierre* (1852), but neither of the others is wholly comprehensible or suc-

cessful. Together, however, they represent the struggle of man against his destiny at various levels of experience.

In 1850, Melville had established a residence at Arrowhead, a farm near Pittsfield, Massachusetts. There, completing *Moby-Dick*, with Hawthorne nearby, a stimulating new friend, he was at the height of his career, but curiously near its sudden decline. After *Moby-Dick*, he published but one more volume of distinguished merit—*The Piazza Tales* (1856), a collection of such smaller masterpieces as "Benito Cereno," "Bartleby the Scrivener," and "The Encantadas." *Pierre* was denounced on moral grounds, and because there was marked confusion of narrative elements and symbolism in that strange novel of incest. *Israel Potter* (1855) and *The Confidence-Man* (1857), both inferior, virtually ended his career as a writer, although he lived for thirty-four years afterward. Readers in general did not understand the symbolic significance of his works, his sales were unsatisfactory, and when the plates of his volumes were destroyed in a publisher's fire, the books were not reprinted. Perhaps he was written out. Four volumes of minor poems, printed chiefly at his uncle's expense, appeared at long intervals.

After some hard and bitter years he settled down humbly in 1866 as a customs inspector in New York, at the foot of Gansevoort Street, which had been named for his mother's distinguished family. Before doing so, however, he launched himself on a pursuit of certainty, a tour to

the Holy Land, that inspired *Clarel*. This tedious poem contains a few quite memorable passages, but as in his novels, poetry remained an implicit quality, never satisfactorily expressed. The Civil War involved him deeply in a human cause, and produced a sensitive record, seldom high poetry, in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866).

In *Billy Budd*, printed below, the novelist recaptured his highest powers during the very last years of his life. He worked on the novelette from November, 1888, until April, 1891, and the manuscript was not fully prepared for press when he died the following September 28 (see the first note to *Billy Budd*). The story is related to the author's earliest adventures at sea; its theme has obvious relations with that of *Moby-Dick*; yet the essential spirit of the work cancels the infuriated rebellion of Captain Ahab. In its reconciliation of the temporal with the eternal there is a sense of luminous peace and atonement.

Even in Melville's greatest works there are undeniable and glaring defects, and such novels as *Mardi* and *Pierre* are distinguished failures, interesting only to the critic. Melville's greatness is something no commentator has quite explained. It shines above the stylistic awkwardness of many passages, the blurred outlines that result from the confusion of autobiography with invented action, the tendency of the author to lose control of his own symbols, or to set the metaphysical thunderbolt side by side with factual discussion or commonplace realism. Having sur-

vived the neglect of his contemporaries and the elaborate attentions of recent critics, he emerges secure in the power and influence of *Typee*, *Moby-Dick*, *The Piazza Tales*, and *Billy Budd*.

*The Works of Herman Melville*, 16 vols., 1922-1924, is standard. A projected edition by various scholars has resulted in good editions of *Collected Poems* (H. P. Vincent), 1945; *Piazza Tales* (E. S. Oliver), 1948; *Pierre* (H. S. Murray), 1949; *Moby-Dick* (L. S. Mansfield and H. P. Vincent), 1952, also edited by W. Thorp, 1947, and by E. S. Foster, 1954. H. C. Horsford edited Melville's *Journal of a Visit to Europe and the Levant* [1857], 1955. R. M. Weaver, *Herman Melville: Mawrner and Mystic*, 1921, was the first

full-length biography. Later notable biographies and studies are John Freeman, *Herman Melville*, 1926; Lewis Mumford, *Herman Melville*, 1929; Charles R. Anderson, *Melville in the South Seas*, 1939; William Braswell, *Melville's Religious Thought*, 1943; W. E. Sedgwick, *Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind*, 1944; H. P. Vincent, *The Trying Out of Moby Dick*, 1949; Leon Howard, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, 1951; Jay Leyda, *Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville*, 1951; Eleanor Melville Metcalf, *Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle*, 1953; E. H. Rosenberry, *Melville and the Comic Spirit*, 1955; James Baird, *Ishmael*, 1956; Perry Miller, *The Raven and the Whale* \* \* \*, 1956; and Newton Arvin, *Herman Melville*, 1950, 1957. *The Letters* \* \* \*, 1960, is a collection by M. H. Davis and W. H. Gilman.

## Billy Budd<sup>1</sup>

### Preface<sup>2</sup>

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which, as every thinker now feels, involved a crisis for Christendom not

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*Billy Budd* is fundamentally significant for the interpretation of its enigmatic author and his masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*. From the moment of its dedicatory note, the author's private personality is intricately incorporated with his creative energy and narrative insight. The manuscript title is "Billy Budd / Sailor / (an inside narrative)"; and beneath it appears the following: "Dedicated to Jack Chase, Englishman, wherever that great heart may now be here on earth or harboured in paradise. Captain of the maintop in the year 1843 in the U.S. Frigate 'United States.'" Melville was a shipmate on that cruise, a young sailor experiencing the cruelties and hardships which he soon excoriated in *White-Jacket*, but also laying the foundations for the later acceptance of life which the tale of *Billy Budd* expresses. This testament of reconciliation provides a clarifying contrast with the novels of the earlier period, with the young novelist's heartbreaking rebellion against the overwhelming capacity for evil in man and the universe, and the inescapable doom, as in *Moby-Dick*, of those who pit themselves against the implacable Leviathan of God. In *Billy Budd* the author has made a truce, perhaps a peace. He is at least reconciled to the enigma represented by Captain Vere's ordeal in sentencing Billy to

death for killing, in Claggart, the festering "depravity according to nature." By "natural law," Billy is guiltless, but not by "[social] law operating through us[.]" For that law and the rigour of it, we are not responsible." The novel was posthumously published as *Billy Budd, Foretopman* in 1924, as a supplement to *The Works* \* \* \* (1922-1924). This was not strictly edited, but all subsequent editions have been based on it. The text below is a new edition, representing a collation with the original manuscript in the Houghton Library of Harvard University by Miss Elizabeth Treeman, an assistant editor of Harvard University Press, and is here published for the first time by special arrangement with Harvard University Press. The present editors recognize that Melville probably did not finally prepare the manuscript for printing. Where additional punctuation is absolutely necessary for clarity, it has been inserted in square brackets. A few interpolated words, and all words not entirely clear in the manuscript have also been placed in square brackets. A few important variant readings left standing in the manuscript are shown in footnotes. Melville's chapter divisions are different from those in the 1924 edition, and we have followed his manuscript in this matter. Spelling is corrected.

2. This Preface appeared in the first publication of this work, under the title *Billy Budd, Foretopman*, in 1924.

exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age involved rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs. In France, to some extent, this was bloodily effected. But what then? Straightway the Revolution itself became a wrongdoer, one more oppressive than the kings. Under Napoleon it enthroned upstart kings, and initiated that prolonged agony of continual war whose final throes was Waterloo. During those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be—a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.

Now, as elsewhere hinted, it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit that at Spithead emboldened the man-of-war's men to rise against real abuses, long-standing ones, and afterwards at the Nore to make inordinate and aggressive demands—successful resistance to which was confirmed only when the ringleaders were hung for an admonitory spectacle to the anchored fleet. Yet in a way analogous to the operation of the Revolution at large—the Great Mutiny, though by Englishmen naturally deemed monstrous at the time, doubtless gave the first latent prompting to most important reforms in the British navy.

## 1

In the time before steamships, or then more frequently than now, a stroller along the docks of any considerable sea-port would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed mariners, man-of-war's men or merchant-sailors in holiday attire ashore on liberty. In certain instances they would flank, or, like a body-guard quite surround some superior figure of their own class, moving along with them like Aldebaran<sup>3</sup> among the lesser lights of his constellation. That signal object was the "Handsome Sailor" of the less prosaic time alike of the military and merchant navies. With no perceptible trace of the vainglorious about him, rather with the off-hand unaffectedness of natural regality, he seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates. A somewhat remarkable instance recurs to me. In Liverpool, now half a century ago I saw under the shadow of the great dingy street-wall of Prince's Dock (an obstruction long since removed) a common sailor, so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterate blood of Ham<sup>4</sup>. A symmetric figure much above the average height. The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest; in his ears were big hoops of gold, and a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band

3. This large red star was regarded by the ancients as the "eye" of the Bull, the constellation Taurus.

4. In popular superstition, the Negroes,

because Noah laid the curse of servitude upon the descendants of his youngest son, Ham, who mocked him; cf. Genesis ix: 22-25.



set off his shapely head.

It was a hot noon in July; and his face, lustrous with perspiration, beamed with barbaric good humor. In jovial sallies right and left, his white teeth flashing into view, he rollicked along, the centre of a company of his shipmates. These were made up of such an assortment of tribes and complexions as would have well fitted them to be marched up by Anacharsis Cloots<sup>5</sup> before the bar of the first French Assembly as Representatives of the Human Race. At each spontaneous tribute rendered by the wayfarers to this black pagod<sup>6</sup> of a fellow—the tribute of a pause and stare, and less frequent an exclamation,—the motley retinue showed that they took that sort of pride in the evoker of it which the Assyrian priests doubtless showed for their grand sculptured Bull when the faithful prostrated themselves.

To return.

If in some cases a bit of a nautical Murat<sup>7</sup> in setting forth his person ashore, the handsome sailor of the period in question evinced nothing of the dandified Billy-be-Damn, an amusing character all but extinct now, but occasionally to be encountered, and in a form yet more amusing than the original, at the tiller of the boats on the tempestuous Erie Canal or, more likely, vaporing in the groggeries along the tow-path. Invariably a proficient in his perilous calling, he was also more or less of a mighty boxer or wrestler. It was strength and beauty. Tales of his prowess were recited. Ashore he was the champion; afloat the spokesman; on every suitable occasion always foremost. Close-reefing topsails in a gale, there he was, astride the weather yard-arm-end, foot in the Flemish horse as "stirrup," both hands tugging at the "carring" as at a bridle, in very much the attitude of young Alexander curbing the fiery Bucephalus.<sup>8</sup> A superb figure, tossed up as by the horns of Taurus<sup>9</sup> against the thunderous sky, cheerily hallooing to the strenuous file along the spar.

The moral nature was seldom out of keeping with the physical make. Indeed, except as toned by the former, the comeliness and power, always attractive in masculine conjunction, hardly could have drawn the sort of honest homage the Handsome Sailor in some examples received from his less gifted associates.

Such a cynosure, at least in aspect, and something such too in nature, though with important variations made apparent as the story proceeds, was welkin-eyed Billy Budd, or Baby Budd as more fa-

5. Carlyle, in his *French Revolution* (1837), popularized Cloots's escapade, as here described, by which he claimed the democratic privileges of the Assembly for this group representing various countries and stations.

6. Pagoda.

7. Joachim Murat (1767?–1815);

French military adventurer, and conspirator with Napoleon. As King of Naples he was called "the Dandy King" for his foppishness.

8. The famous war horse of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.)

9. Cf. Aldebaran, above.

miliarly under circumstances hereafter to be given he at last came to be called[,] aged twenty-one, a foretopman of the British fleet toward the close of the last decade of the eighteenth century. It was not very long prior to the time of the narration that follows that he had entered the King's Service, having been impressed<sup>1</sup> on the Narrow Seas from a homeward-bound English merchantman into a seventy-four<sup>2</sup> outward-bound, H.M.S. *Indomitable*; which ship, as was not unusual in those hurried days having been obliged to put to sea short of her proper complement of men. Plump upon Billy at first sight in the gangway the boarding officer Lieutenant Ratcliffe pounced, even before the merchantman's crew was formally mustered on the quarter-deck for his deliberate inspection. And him only he elected. For whether it was because the other men when ranged before him showed to ill advantage after Billy, or whether he had some scruples in view of the merchantman being rather short-handed, however it might be, the officer contented himself with his first spontaneous choice. To the surprise of the ship's company, though much to the Lieutenant's satisfaction Billy made no demur. But, indeed, any demur would have been as idle as the protest of a goldfinch popped into a cage.

Noting this uncomplaining acquiescence, all but cheerful one might say, the shipmates turned a surprised glance of silent reproach at the sailor. The shipmaster was one of those worthy mortals found in every vocation even the humbler ones—the sort of person whom everybody agrees in calling “a respectable man.” And—nor so strange to report as it may appear to be—though a ploughman of the troubled waters, life-long contending with the intractable elements, there was nothing this honest soul at heart loved better than simple peace and quiet. For the rest, he was fifty or thereabouts, a little inclined to corpulence, a prepossessing face, unwhiskered, and of an agreeable color—a rather full face, humanely intelligent in expression. On a fair day with a fair wind and all going well, a certain musical chime in his voice seemed to be the veritable unobstructed outcome of the innermost man. He had much prudence, much conscientiousness, and there were occasions when these virtues were the cause of overmuch disquietude in him. On a passage, so long as his craft was in any proximity to land, no sleep for Captain Graveling. He took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some shipmasters.

Now while Billy Budd was down in the fore-castle getting his kit together, the *Indomitable's* lieutenant, burly and bluff, nowise disconcerted by Captain Graveling's omitting to proffer the customary hospitalities on an occasion so unwelcome to him, an omission

1. Laws covering British naval recruitment then permitted commanders to complete their crews by forcing, or “impressing,” merchant sailors, on land or

sea, into service.

2. *I.e.*, a ship carrying seventy-four guns.

simply caused by preoccupation of thought, unceremoniously invited himself into the cabin, and also to a flask from the spirit-locker, a receptacle which his experienced eye instantly discovered. In fact he was one of those sea-dogs in whom all the hardship and peril of naval life in the great prolonged wars of his time never impaired the natural instinct for sensuous enjoyment. His duty he always faithfully did; but duty is sometimes a dry obligation, and he was for irrigating its aridity, whensoever possible, with a fertilizing decoction of strong waters. For the cabin's proprietor there was nothing left but to play the part of the enforced host with whatever grace and alacrity were practicable. As necessary adjuncts to the flask, he silently placed tumbler and water-jug before the irrepressible guest. But excusing himself from partaking just then, [he] dismally watched the unembarrassed officer deliberately diluting his grog a little, then tossing it off in three swallows, pushing the empty tumbler away, yet not so far as to be beyond easy reach, at the same [time] settling himself in his seat and smacking his lips with high satisfaction, looking straight at the host.

These proceedings over, the Master broke the silence; and there lurked a rueful reproach in the tone of his voice; "Lieutenant, you are going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em."

"Yes, I know" rejoined the other, immediately drawing back the tumbler preliminary to a replenishing; "Yes, I know. Sorry."

"Beg pardon, but you don't understand, Lieutenant. See here now. Before I shipped that young fellow, my forecastle was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times, I tell you, aboard the '*Rights*' here. I was worried to that degree my pipe had no comfort for me. But Billy came; and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular; but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones. They took to him like hornets to treacle; all but the buffer of the gang, the big shaggy chap with the fire-red whiskers. He indeed out of envy, perhaps, of the newcomer, and thinking such a 'sweet and pleasant fellow,' as he mockingly designated him to the others, could hardly have the spirit of a game-cock, must needs bestir himself in trying to get up an ugly row with him. Billy forebore with him and reasoned with him in a pleasant way—he is something like myself, lieutenant, to whom aught like a quarrel is hateful—but nothing served. So, in the second dog-watch one day the Red Whiskers in presence of the others, under pretence of showing Billy just whence a sirloin steak was cut—for the fellow had once been a butcher—insultingly gave him a dig under the ribs. Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm. I dare say he never meant to do quite as much as he did, but anyhow he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing. It took about half a minute, I should think. And, lord bless you, the lubber was astonished at the celerity. And will you believe it, Lieutenant, the Red Whiskers now

really loves Billy—loves him, or is the biggest hypocrite that ever I heard of. But they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn his old trousers for him; the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it's the happy family here. But now, Lieutenant, if that young fellow goes—I know how it will be aboard the '*Rights*.' Not again very soon shall I, coming up from dinner, lean over the capstan smoking a quiet pipe—no, not very soon again, I think. Ay, Lieutenant, you are going to take away the jewel of 'em; you are going to take away my peacemaker!" And with that the good soul had really some ado in checking a rising sob.

"Well," said the officer who had listened with amused interest to all this, and now waxing merry with his tippie; "Well, blessed are the peacemakers especially the fighting peacemakers! And such are the seventy-four beauties some of which you see poking their noses out of the port-holes of yonder war-ship lying-to for me" pointing thro' the cabin window at the *Indomitable*. "But courage! don't look so downhearted, man. Why, I pledge you in advance the royal approbation. Rest assured that His Majesty will be delighted to know that in a time when his hard tack is not sought for by sailors with such avidity as should be; a time also when some shipmasters privily resent the borrowing from them a tar or two for the service; His Majesty, I say, will be delighted to learn that *one* shipmaster at least cheerfully surrenders to the King, the flower of his flock, a sailor who with equal loyalty makes no dissent.—But where's my beauty? Ah," looking through the cabin's open door "Here he comes; and, by Jove—lugging along his chest—Apollo with his portmanteau!—My man," stepping out to him, "you can't take that big box aboard a warship. The boxes there are mostly shot-boxes. Put your duds in a bag, lad. Boot and saddle for the cavalryman, bag and hammock for the man-of-war's man."

The transfer from chest to bag was made. And, after seeing his man into the cutter and then following him down, the lieutenant pushed off from the *Rights-of-Man*.<sup>3</sup> That was the merchant-ship's name; tho' by her master and crew abbreviated in sailor fashion into *The Rights*. The hard-headed Dundee owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time and had gone everywhere. In christening his vessel after the title of Paine's volume the man of Dundee was something like his contemporary shipowner, Stephen Girard<sup>4</sup> of Philadelphia, whose sympathies, alike with his native land and its liberal philosophers, he convinced by naming his ships after Voltaire, Diderot, and so forth.

3. Title of a work by Thomas Paine, discussed earlier in this volume.

4. Girard (1750-1831), the great Philadelphia merchant and banker, re-

mained in his native France until he was twenty-seven, and read widely among the liberal authors of that period.

But now, when the boat swept under the merchant-man's stern, and officer and oarsmen were noting—some bitterly and others with a grin,—the name emblazoned there; just then it was that the new recruit jumped up from the bow where the coxswain had directed him to sit, and waving [his] hat to his silent shipmates sorrowfully looking over at him from the taffrail, bade the lads a genial good-bye. Then, making a salutation as to the ship herself, "And good-bye to you too, old *Rights of Man*."

"Down, Sir!" roared the lieutenant, instantly assuming all the rigor of his rank, though with difficulty repressing a smile.

To be sure, Billy's action was a terrible breach of naval decorum. But in that decorum he had never been instructed; in consideration of which the lieutenant would hardly have been so energetic in reproof but for the concluding farewell to the ship. This he rather took as meant to convey a covert sally on the new recruit's part, a sly slur at impressment in general, and that of himself in especial. And yet, more likely, if satire it was in effect, it was hardly so by intention, for Billy tho' happily endowed with the gayety of high health, youth, and a free heart, was yet by no means of a satirical turn. The will to it and the sinister dexterity were alike wanting. To deal in double meanings and insinuations of any sort was quite foreign to his nature.

As to his enforced enlistment, that he seemed to take pretty much as he was wont to take any vicissitude of weather. Like the animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist. And, it may be, that he rather liked this adventurous turn in his affairs, which promised an opening into novel scenes and martial excitements.

Aboard the *Indomitable* our merchant-sailor was forthwith rated as an able-seaman and assigned to the starboard watch of the fore-top. He was soon at home in the service, not at all disliked for his unpretentious good looks and a sort of genial happy-go-lucky air. No merrier man in his mess: in marked contrast to certain other individuals included like himself among the impressed portion of the ship's company; for these when not actively employed were sometimes, and more particularly in the last dog-watch when the drawing near of twilight induced revery, apt to fall into a saddish mood which in some partook of sullenness. But they were not so young as our foretopman, and no few of them must have known a hearth of some sort, others may have had wives and children left, too probably, in uncertain circumstances, and hardly any but must have had acknowledged kith and kin, while for Billy, as will shortly be seen, his entire family was practically invested in himself.

Though our new-made foretopman was well received in the top and on the gun-decks, hardly here was he that cynosure he had pre-

viously been among those minor ship's companies of the merchant marine, with which companies only had he hitherto consorted.

He was young; and despite his all but fully developed frame in aspect looked even younger than he really was, owing to a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face all but feminine in purity of natural complexion but where, thanks to his seagoing, the lily was quite suppressed and the rose had some ado visibly to flush through the tan.

To one essentially such a novice in the complexities of factitious life, the abrupt transition from his former and simpler sphere to the ampler and more knowing world of a great warship; this might well have abashed him had there been any conceit or vanity in his composition. Among her miscellaneous multitude, the *Indomitable* mustered several individuals who however inferior in grade were of no common natural stamp, sailors more signally susceptible of that air which continuous martial discipline and repeated presence in battle can in some degree impart even to the average man. As the *handsome sailor* Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the highborn dames of the court. But this change of circumstances he scarce noted. As little did he observe that something about him provoked an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the blue-jackets. Nor less unaware was he of the peculiar favorable effect his person and demeanor had upon the more intelligent gentlemen of the quarter-deck. Nor could this well have been otherwise. Cast in a mould peculiar to the finest physical examples of those Englishmen in whom the Saxon strain would seem not at all to partake of any Norman or other admixture, he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man, Hercules. But this again was subtly modified by another and pervasive quality. The ear, small and shapely, the arch of the foot, the curve in mouth and nostril, even the indurated hand dyed to the orange-tawny of the toucan's<sup>a</sup> bill, a hand telling alike of the halyards and tar-bucket; but, above all, something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favored by Love and the Graces; all this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot. The mysteriousness here, became less mysterious through a matter-of-fact elicited when Billy at the capstan was being formally mustered into the service. Asked by the officer, a small brisk little gentleman as it chanced among other questions, his place of birth, he replied, "Please, Sir, I don't know."

"Don't know where you were born?—Who was your father?"

5. Colorful bird of the American tropics, whose beak is conspicuously large.

"God knows, Sir."

Struck by the straightforward simplicity of these replies, the officer next asked "Do you know anything about your beginning?"

"No, Sir. But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silk-lined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man's door in Bristol [.]"

"*Found* say you? Well," throwing back his head and looking up and down the new recruit; "Well[,] it turns out to have been a pretty good find. Hope they'll find some more like you, my man; the fleet sadly needs them."

Yes, Billy Budd was a foundling, a presumable by-blow,<sup>6</sup> and, evidently, no ignoble one. Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse.

For the rest, with little or no sharpness of faculty or any trace of the wisdom of the serpent, nor yet quite a dove, he possessed that kind and degree of intelligence going along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human creature, one to whom not yet has been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge. He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song.

Of self-consciousness he seemed to have little or none, or about as much as we may reasonably impute to a dog of Saint Bernard's breed.

Habitually living with the elements and knowing little more of the land than as a beach, or, rather, that portion of the terraqueous globe providentially set apart for dance-houses doxies and tapsters, in short what sailors call a "fiddlers' green," his simple nature remained unsophisticated by those moral obliquities which are not in every case incompatible with that manufacturable thing known as respectability. But are sailors, frequenters of "fiddlers'-greens," without vices? No; but less often than with landsmen do their vices, so called, partake of crookedness of heart, seeming less to proceed from viciousness than exuberance of vitality after long constraint; frank manifestations in accordance with natural law. By his original constitution aided by the cooperating influences of his lot, Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company.

And here be it submitted that apparently going to corroborate the doctrine of man's fall, a doctrine now popularly ignored, it is observable that where certain virtues pristine and unadulterate peculiarly characterize anybody in the external uniform of civilization, they will upon scrutiny seem not to be derived from custom or convention, but rather to be out of keeping with these, as if indeed

6. Usually, "by-blow"—an illegitimate child.

exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain's city and civilized man. The character marked by such qualities has to an unvitiated taste an untampered-with flavor like that of berries, while the man thoroughly civilized even in a fair specimen of the breed has to the same moral palate a questionable smack as of a compounded wine. To any stray inheritor of these primitive qualities found, like Caspar Hauser,<sup>7</sup> wandering dazed in any Christian capital of our time the good-natured poet's famous invocation, near two thousand years ago, of the good rustic out of his latitude in the Rome of the Cæsars, still appropriately holds:—

"Honest and poor, faithful in word and thought  
What has thee, Fabian, to the city brought?"<sup>8</sup>

Though our Handsome Sailor had as much of masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see; nevertheless, like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne's minor tales,<sup>9</sup> there was just one thing amiss in him. No visible blemish indeed, as with the lady; no, but an occasional liability to a vocal defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be, yet under sudden provocation of strong heart-feeling his voice otherwise singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy, in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us—I too have a hand here.

The avowal of such an imperfection in the Handsome Sailor should be evidence not alone that he is not presented as a conventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance.

3

At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the *Indomitable* that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. No long time elapsed before the junction was effected. As one of that fleet the seventy-four participated in its movements, tho' at times on account of her superior sailing qualities, in the absence of frigates, despatched on separate duty as a scout and at times on less temporary service. But with all this the story has little concernment, restricted as it is to the inner life of one particular ship and the career of an individual sailor.

7. Kaspar Hauser (1812?–1833) mysteriously appeared in 1828 in Nuremberg, Germany. Popularly imagined to be of noble birth, he aroused international at-

tention, and was mysteriously assassinated.

8. Martial, *Epigrams*, Book IV, 5.

9. Apparently "The Birthmark"; cf. "blemish," below.



It was the summer of 1797. In the April of that year had occurred the commotion at Spithead followed in May by a second and yet more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore. The latter is known, and without exaggeration in the epithet, as the Great Mutiny.<sup>1</sup> It was indeed a demonstration more menacing to England than the contemporary manifestoes and conquering and proselyting armies of the French Directory.

To the British Empire the Nore Mutiny was what a strike in the fire-brigade would be to London threatened by general arson. In a crisis when the kingdom might well have anticipated the famous signal that some years later published along the naval line of battle what it was that upon occasion England expected of Englishmen;<sup>2</sup> *that* was the time when at the mast-heads of the three-deckers and seventy-fours moored in her own roadstead—a fleet, the right arm of a Power then all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World, the blue-jackets, to be numbered by thousands [,] ran up with huzzas the British colors with the union and cross wiped out; by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined, into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames.

The event converted into irony for a time those spirited strains of Dibdin<sup>3</sup>—as a song-writer no mean auxiliary to the English Government at the European conjuncture—strains celebrating, among other things, the patriotic devotion of the British tar:

*"And as for my life, 'tis the King's!"*

Such an episode in the Island's grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge; one of them (G. P. R. James)<sup>4</sup> candidly acknowledging that fain would he pass it over did not "impartiality forbid fastidiousness." And yet his mention is less a narration than a reference, having to do hardly at all with details. Nor are these readily to be found in the libraries. Like some other events in every age befalling states everywhere including America the Great Mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background. Such events can not be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. If a well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family; a nation in the like cir-

1. Cf. the Preface, above.

2. In 1805, in the naval battle against the French and Spanish off Trafalgar, where he was killed, Admiral Nelson ran up the famous signal "England expects every man to do his duty."

3. Charles Dibdin (1745–1814) was an English dramatist, but his enduring fame rests on his sailor songs and chanteys.

4. G. P. R. James (1799–1860), a very popular and prolific British novelist.

cumstance may without reproach be equally discreet.

Though after parleyings between Government and the ring-leaders, and concessions by the former as to some glaring abuses, the first uprising—that at Spithead—with difficulty was put down, or matters for the time pacified; yet at the Nore the unforeseen renewal of insurrection on a yet larger scale, and emphasized in the conferences that ensued by demands deemed by the authorities not only inadmissible but aggressively insolent, indicated—if the Red Flag did not sufficiently do so[—]what was the spirit animating the men. Final suppression, however, there was; but only made possible perhaps by the unswerving loyalty of the marine corps a[nd] voluntary resumption of loyalty among influential sections of the crews.

To some extent the Nore Mutiny may be regarded as analogous to the distempering irruption of contagious fever in a frame constitutionally sound, and which anon throws it off.

At all events, of these thousands of mutineers were some of the tars who not so very long afterwards—whether wholly prompted thereto by patriotism, or pugnacious instinct, or by both,—helped to win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile,<sup>5</sup> and the naval crown of crowns for him at Trafalgar. To the mutineers those battles and especially Trafalgar were a plenary absolution and a grand one: For all that goes to make up scenic naval display, heroic magnificence in arms, those battles especially Trafalgar stand unmatched in human annals.

## 4

Concerning "*The greatest sailor since the  
world began.*" Tennyson?<sup>6</sup>

In this matter of writing, resolve as one may to keep to the main road, some by-paths have an enticement not readily to be withstood. I am going to err into such a by-path. If the reader will keep me company I shall be glad. At the least we can promise ourselves that pleasure which is wickedly said to be in sinning, for a literary sin the divergence will be.

Very likely it is no new remark that the inventions of our time have at last brought about a change in sea-warfare in degree corresponding to the revolution in all warfare effected by the original introduction from China into Europe of gunpowder. The first European fire-arm, a clumsy contrivance, was, as is well known, scouted by no few of the knights as a base implement, good enough peradventure for weavers too craven to stand up crossing steel with steel in frank fight. But as ashore knightly valor tho' shorn of its blazonry did not cease with the knights, neither on the seas though nowadays

5. For his victory at the Nile (1798), Nelson was made a baron; later he became a viscount.

6. Melville's question mark after the quotation suggests his intention to check

it before publication. The line, which is line 7 in Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" (1852), reads: "The greatest sailor since our world began."

in encounters there a certain kind of displayed gallantry be fallen out of date as hardly applicable under changed circumstances, did the nobler qualities of such naval magnates as Don John of Austria, Doria, Van Tromp, Jean Bart, the long line of British Admirals and the American Decatur of 1812 become obsolete with their wooden walls.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, to anybody who can hold the Present at its worth without being inappreciative of the Past, it may be forgiven, if to such an one the solitary old hulk at Portsmouth, Nelson's *Victory*, seems to float there, not alone as the decaying monument of a fame incorruptible, but also as a poetic reproach, softened by its picturesqueness, to the *Monitors*<sup>8</sup> and yet mightier hulls of the European iron-clads. And this not altogether because such craft are unsightly, unavoidably lacking the symmetry and grand lines of the old battle-ships, but equally for other reasons.

There are some, perhaps, who while not altogether inaccessible to that poetic reproach just alluded to, may yet on behalf of the new order, be disposed to parry it; and this to the extent of iconoclasm, if need be. For example, prompted by the sight of the star inserted in the *Victory's* quarter-deck designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell, these martial utilitarians may suggest considerations implying that Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only unnecessary, but not military, nay, savored of foolhardiness and vanity. They may add, too, that at Trafalgar it was in effect nothing less than a challenge to death; and death came; and that but for his bravado the victorious Admiral might possibly have survived the battle, and so, instead of having his sagacious dying injunctions overruled by his immediate successor in command he himself when the contest was decided might have brought his shattered fleet to anchor, a proceeding which might have averted the deplorable loss of life by shipwreck in the elemental tempest that followed the martial one.

Well, should we set aside the more disputable point whether for various reasons it was possible to anchor the fleet, then plausibly enough the Benthamites<sup>9</sup> of war may urge the above.

7. All famous "iron admirals" of the wooden ships. Don John of Austria commanded the fleet of the Holy League in the defeat of the Turks at Lepanto (1571); Andrea Doria (1468-1560), Genoese admiral, was the "Liberator of Genoa" from the Turks; Maarten Tromp (1597-1653) commanded the Dutch fleets in struggles for independence from Spain, Portugal, and Britain; Jean Bart, famous French soldier of fortune, commanded privateers against the Dutch (1686-1697); and the American naval hero Stephen Decatur was renowned for daring exploits against the

Tripoli pirates (1803-1804) and for victories over British ships in the War of 1812.

8. During the Civil War, the *Monitor's* defeat of the southern *Merrimac* at Hampton Roads (March, 1862), ended the first engagement between ironclad ships.

9. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), British jurist and utilitarian philosopher, in *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) propounded his famous dictum that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation."

But the *might-have-been* is but boggy ground to build on. And, certainly, in foresight as to the larger issue of an encounter, and anxious preparations for it—buoying the deadly way and mapping it out, as at Copenhagen<sup>1</sup>—few commanders have been so painstakingly circumspect as this same reckless declarer of his person in fight.

Personal prudence even when dictated by quite other than selfish considerations surely is no special virtue in a military man; while an excessive love of glory, impassioning a less burning impulse, the honest sense of duty, is the first. If the name *Wellington* is not so much of a trumpet to the blood as the simpler name *Nelson*, the reason for this may perhaps be inferred from the above. Alfred<sup>2</sup> in his funeral ode on the victor of Waterloo ventures not to call him the greatest soldier of all time, tho' in the same ode he invokes Nelson as "the greatest sailor since the world began."

At Trafalgar Nelson on the brink of opening the fight sat down and wrote his last brief will and testament. If under the presentiment of the most magnificent of all victories to be crowned by his own glorious death, a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds; if thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice were indeed vainglory, then affectation and fustian is each more heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts.

## 5

Yes, the outbreak at the Nore was put down. But not every grievance was redressed. If the contractors, for example, were no longer permitted to ply some practices peculiar to their tribe everywhere, such as providing shoddy cloth, rations not sound, or false in the measure, not the less impressment, for one thing, went on. By custom sanctioned for centuries, and judicially maintained by a Lord Chancellor as late as Mansfield,<sup>3</sup> that mode of manning the fleet, a mode now fallen into a sort of abeyance but never formally renounced, it was not practicable to give up in those years. Its abrogation would have crippled the indispensable fleet, one wholly under canvas, no steam-power, its innumerable sails and thousands of cannon, everything in short, worked by muscle alone; a fleet the more insatiate in demand for men, because then multiplying its ship[s] of all grades against contingencies present and to come of the convulsed Continent.

Discontent foreran the Two Mutinies, and more or less it lurkingly survived them. Hence it was not unreasonable to apprehend some

1. Nelson's siege of Copenhagen (1801) became a famous example of strategy.  
2. *I.e.*, Tennyson; *c.f.* epigraph to this chapter.

3. William Murray, Baron Mansfield, British parliamentarian, became lord chief justice in 1756, and was later a cabinet minister (1773-1788).

return of trouble sporadic or general. One instance of such apprehensions: In the same year with this story, Nelson, then Vice Admiral Sir Horatio, being with the fleet off the Spanish coast, was directed by the Admiral in command to shift his pennant from the *Captain* to the *Theseus*; and for this reason: that the latter ship having newly arrived on the station from home where it had taken part in the Great Mutiny, danger was apprehended from the temper of the men; and it was thought that an officer like Nelson was the one, not indeed to terrorize the crew into base subjection, but to win them, by force of his mere presence back to an allegiance if not as enthusiastic as his own, yet as true. So it was that for a time on more than one quarter-deck anxiety did exist. At sea precautionary vigilance was strained against relapse. At short notice an engagement might come on. When it did, the lieutenants assigned to batteries felt it incumbent on them, in some instances, to stand with drawn swords behind the men working the guns.

6

But on board the seventy-four in which Billy now swung his hammock, very little in the manner of the men and nothing obvious in the demeanor of the officers would have suggested to an ordinary observer that the Great Mutiny was a recent event. In their general bearing and conduct the commissioned officers of a war-ship naturally take their tone from the commander, that is if he have that ascendancy of character that ought to be his.

Captain the Honorable Edward Fairfax Vere, to give his full title, was a bachelor of forty or thereabouts, a sailor of distinction even in a time prolific of renowned seamen. Though allied to the higher nobility his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstance. He had seen much service, been in various engagements, always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline; thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so. For his gallantry in the West Indian waters as flag-lieutenant under Rodney in that Admiral's crowning victory over De Grasse,<sup>4</sup> he was made a post-captain.

Ashore in the garb of a civilian scarce anyone would have taken him for a sailor, more especially that he never garnished unprofessional talk with nautical terms, and grave in his bearing, evinced little appreciation of mere humor. It was not out of keeping with these traits that on a passage when nothing demanded his paramount action, he was the most undemonstrative of men. Any landsman observing this gentleman not conspicuous by his stature and wearing

4. The British admiral George Brydges, Baron Rodney (1719-1792) defeated the French admiral DeGrasse in a naval engagement off Dominica, in the Leewards, in 1782.

no pronounced insignia, emerging from his cabin to the open deck, and noting the silent deference of the officers retiring to leeward, might have taken him for the King's guest, a civilian aboard the King's-ship[,] some highly honorable discreet envoy on his way to an important post. But in fact this unobtrusiveness of demeanor may have proceeded from a certain unaffected modesty of manhood sometimes accompanying a resolute nature, a modesty evinced at all times not calling for pronounced action, and which shown in any rank of life suggests a virtue aristocratic in kind.

As with some others engaged in various departments of the world's more heroic activities, Captain Vere though practical enough upon occasion would at times betray a certain dreaminess of mood. Standing alone on the weather-side of the quarter deck, one hand holding by the rigging he would absently gaze off at the blank sea. At the presentation to him then of some minor matter interrupting the current of his thoughts he would show more or less irascibility; but instantly he would control it.

In the navy he was popularly known by the appellation—Starry Vere. How such a designation happened to fall upon one who whatever his sturdy qualities was without any brilliant ones was in this wise: A favorite kinsman, Lord Denton, a free-hearted fellow, had been the first to meet and congratulate him upon his return to England from his West Indian cruise; and but the day previous turning over a copy of Andrew Marvell's<sup>5</sup> poems had lighted, not for the first time however, upon the lines entitled *Appleton House*, the name of one of the seats of their common ancestor, a hero in the German wars of the seventeenth century, in which poem occur the lines,

"This 'tis to have been from the first  
In a domestic heaven nursed,  
Under the discipline severe  
Of Fairfax and the starry Vere[.]"

And so, upon embracing his cousin fresh from Rodney's great victory wherein he had played so gallant a part, brimming over with just family pride in the sailor of their house, he exuberantly exclaimed, "Give ye joy, Ed; give ye joy, my starry Vere!" This got currency, and the novel prefix serving in familiar parlance readily to distinguish the *Indomitable's* Captain from another Vere his senior, a distant relative an officer of like rank in the navy, it remained permanently attached to the surname.

## 7

In view of the part that the commander of the *Indomitable* plays in scenes shortly to follow, it may be well to fill out that sketch of

5. British poet (1621-1678), who is still one of the best known of the Caroline writers.

him outlined in the previous chapter.

Aside from his qualities as a sea-officer Captain Vere was an exceptional character. Unlike no few of England's renowned sailors, long and arduous service with signal devotion to it, had not resulted in absorbing and *salting* the entire man. He had a marked leaning toward everything intellectual. He loved books, never going to sea without a newly replenished library, compact but of the best. The isolated leisure, in some cases so wearisome, falling at intervals to commanders even during a war-cruise, never was tedious to Captain Vere. With nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle, his bias was towards those books to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active post of authority in the world, naturally inclines: books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era—history, biography and unconventional writers, who, free from cant and convention, like Montaigne, honestly and in the spirit of common sense philosophize upon realities.

In this line of reading he found confirmation of his own more reasoned thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics, there had got to be established in him some positive convictions, which he forefelt would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired. In view of the troubled period in which his lot was cast this was well for him. His settled convictions were as a dyke against those invading waters of novel opinion social political and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, not alone Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them because they seemed to him incapable of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind.

With minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank, with whom at times he would necessarily consort, found him lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman as they deemed. Upon any chance withdrawal from their company one would be apt to say to another, something like this: "Vere is a noble fellow, Starry Vere. Spite the gazettes, Sir Horatio["] meaning him with the Lord title<sup>6</sup> ["]is at bottom scarce a better seaman or fighter. But between you and me now don't you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running thro' him? Yes, like the King's yarn in a coil of navy-rope?["]

Some apparent ground there was for this sort of confidential

6. *I.e.*, Admiral Horatio Nelson, a viscount.

criticism; since not only did the Captain's discourse never fall into the jocosely familiar, but in illustrating of any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time he would be as apt to cite some historic character or incident of antiquity as that he would cite from the moderns. He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions however pertinent they might really be were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals. But considerateness in such matters is not easy to natures constituted like Captain Vere's. Their honesty prescribes to them directness, sometimes far-reaching like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier.

8

The lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere's staff it is not necessary here to particularize, nor needs it to make any mention of any of the warrant-officers. But among the petty-officers was one who having much to do with the story, may as well be forthwith introduced. His portrait I essay, but shall never hit it. This was John Claggart, the Master-at-arms. But that sea-title may to landsmen seem somewhat equivocal. Originally doubtless that petty-officer's function was the instruction of the men in the use of arms, sword or cutlas. But very long ago, owing to the advance in gunnery making hand-to-hand encounters less frequent and giving to nitre and sulphur the preeminence over steel, that function ceased; the master-at-arms of a great war-ship becoming a sort of Chief of Police charged among other matters with the duty of preserving order on the populous lower gun-decks.

Claggart was a man about five and thirty, somewhat spare and tall, yet of no ill figure upon the whole. His hand was too small and shapely to have been accustomed to hard toil. The face was a notable one; the features all except the chin cleanly cut as those on a Greek medallion; yet the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's,<sup>7</sup> had something of strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the prints of the Rev. Dr. Titus Oates, the historic deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot.<sup>8</sup> It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect; silken jet curls partly clustering over it, making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old. This complexion, singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors, and in part the result of his official seclusion from the

7. Shawnee chieftan (1768?-1813), leader of a western Indian alliance; he joined the British and was killed in the War of 1812.

8. Titus Oates (1649-1705) was fabri-

cator in 1678 of the alleged "Popish Plot" to seize the English crown for Catholicism by assassinating King Charles and terrorizing London.



sunlight, tho it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood. But his general aspect and manner were so suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function that when not actively engaged in it he looked like a man of high quality, social and moral, who for reasons of his own was keeping incog.<sup>9</sup> Nothing was known of his former life. It might be that he was an Englishman; and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth, but through naturalization in early childhood. Among certain grizzled sea-gossips of the gun-decks and fore-castle went a rumor perdue that the master-at-arms was a *chevalier* who had volunteered into the King's navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King's Bench. The fact that nobody could substantiate this report was, of course, nothing against its secret currency. Such a rumor once started on the gun-decks in reference to almost anyone below the rank of a commissioned officer would, during the period assigned to this narrative, have seemed not altogether wanting in credibility to the tarry old wiseacres of a man-of-war crew. And indeed a man of Claggart's accomplishments, without prior nautical experience entering the navy at mature life, as he did, and necessarily allotted at the start to the lowest grade in it; a man too who never made allusion to his previous life ashore; these were circumstances which in the dearth of exact knowledge as to his true antecedents opened to the invidious a vague field for unfavorable surmise.

But the sailors' dog-watch gossip concerning him derived a vague plausibility from the fact that now for some period the British Navy could so little afford to be squeamish in the matter of keeping up the muster-rolls, that not only were press-gangs notoriously abroad both afloat and ashore, but there was little or no secret about another matter, namely that the London police were at liberty to capture any able-bodied suspect, any questionable fellow at large and summarily ship him to the dockyard or fleet. Furthermore, even among voluntary enlistments there were instances where the motive thereto partook neither of patriotic impulse nor yet of a random desire to experience a bit of sea-life and martial adventure. Insolvent debtors of minor grade, together with the promiscuous lame ducks of morality found in the Navy a convenient and secure refuge. Secure, because once enlisted aboard a King's-Ship, they were as much in sanctuary, as the transgressor of the Middle Ages harboring himself under the shadow of the altar. Such sanctioned irregularities, which for obvious reasons the Government would hardly think to parade at the time and which consequently, and as affecting the least influential class of mankind, have all but dropped into oblivion, lend

9. Then a familiar abbreviation for *incognito*, "unrecognized."

color to something for the truth whereof I do not vouch, and hence have some scruple in stating; something I remember having seen in print though the book I can not recall; but the same thing was personally communicated to me now more than forty years ago by an old pensioner in a cocked hat with whom I had a most interesting talk on the terrace at Greenwich, a Baltimore negro, a Trafalgar man.<sup>1</sup> It was to this effect: In the case of a warship short of hands whose speedy sailing was imperative, the deficient quota in lack of any other way of making it good, would be eked out by draughts culled direct from the jails. For reasons previously suggested it would not perhaps be easy at the present day directly to prove or disprove the allegation. But allowed as a verity, how significant would it be of England's straits at the time confronted by those wars which like a flight of harpies rose shrieking from the din and dust of the fallen Bastille. That era appears measurably clear to us who look back at it, and but read of it. But to the grandfathers of us graybeards, the more thoughtful of them, the genius of it presented an aspect like that of Camoen's<sup>2</sup> Spirit of the Cape, an eclipsing menace mysterious and prodigious. Not America was exempt from apprehension. At the height of Napoleon's unexampled conquests, there were Americans who had fought at Bunker Hill who looked forward to the possibility that the Atlantic might prove no barrier against the ultimate schemes of this French upstart from the revolutionary chaos who seemed in act of fulfilling judgment prefigured in the Apocalypse.

But the less credence was to be given to the gun-deck talk touching Claggart, seeing that no man holding his office in a man-of-war can ever hope to be popular with the crew. Besides, in derogatory comments upon anyone against whom they have a grudge, or for any reason or no reason mislike, sailors are much like landsmen, they are apt to exaggerate or romance it.

About as much was really known to the *Indomitable's* tars of the master-at-arms' career before entering the service as an astronomer knows about a comet's travels prior to its first observable appearance in the sky. The verdict of the sea quidnuncs<sup>3</sup> has been cited only by way of showing what sort of moral impression the man made upon rude uncultivated natures whose conceptions of human wickedness were necessarily of the narrowest, limited to ideas of vulgar rascality, —a thief among the swinging hammocks during a night-watch, or the man-brokers and land-sharks of the sea-ports.

It was no gossip, however, but fact, that though, as before hinted, Claggart upon his entrance into the navy was, as a novice, assigned to the least honorable section of a man-of-war's crew, embracing the

1. *I.e.*, one who had fought at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), Nelson's fatal victory.

2. Properly, "Camoëns," English spell-

ing for "Camões," Portuguese poet.

3. Literally, "what now?" Hence, a busybody, a gossip.

drudgery, he did not long remain there.

The superior capacity he immediately evinced, his constitutional sobriety, ingratiating deference to superiors, together with a peculiar ferreting genius manifested on a singular occasion, all this capped by a certain austere patriotism abruptly advanced him to the position of master-at-arms.

Of this maritime Chief of Police the ship's-corporals, so called, were the immediate subordinates, and compliant ones; and this, as is to be noted in some business departments ashore, almost to a degree inconsistent with entire moral volition. His place put various converging wires of underground influence under the Chief's control, capable when astutely worked thro his understrappers of operating to the mysterious discomfort[,] if nothing worse, of any of the sea-commonalty.

9

Life in the fore-top well agreed with Billy Budd. There, when not actually engaged on the yards yet higher aloft, the topmen, who as such had been picked out for youth and activity, constituted an aerial club lounging at ease against the smaller stun'sails rolled up into cushions, spinning yarns like the lazy gods, and frequently amused with what was going on in the busy world of the decks below. No wonder then that a young fellow of Billy's disposition was well content in such society. Giving no cause of offence to anybody, he was always alert at a call. So in the merchant service it had been with him. But now such a punctiliousness in duty was shown that his top-mates would sometimes good-naturedly laugh at him for it. This heightened alacrity had its cause, namely, the impression made upon him by the first formal gangway-punishment he had ever witnessed, which befell the day following his impressment. It had been incurred by a little fellow, young, a novice[,] an after-guardsmen absent from his assigned post when the ship was being put about; a dereliction resulting in a rather serious hitch to that manœuvre, one demanding instantaneous promptitude in letting go and making fast. When Billy saw the culprit's naked back under the scourge gridironed with red welts, and worse; when he marked the dire expression on the liberated man's face as with his woolen shirt flung over him by the executioner he rushed forward from the spot to bury himself in the crowd, Billy was horrified. He resolved that never through remissness would he make himself liable to such a visitation or do or omit aught that might merit even verbal reproof. What then was his surprise and concern when ultimately he found himself getting into petty trouble occasionally about such matters as the stowage of his bag or something amiss in his hammock, matters under the police oversight of the ship's-corporals of the lower decks, and which brought down on him a vague threat from one of them.

So heedful in all things as he was, how could this be? He could not understand it, and it more than vexed him. When he spoke to his young topmates about it they were either lightly incredulous or found something comical in his unconcealed anxiety. "Is it your bag, Billy?" said one "well, sew yourself up in it, bully boy, and then you'll be sure to know if anybody meddles with it."

Now there was a veteran aboard who because his years began to disqualify him for more active work had been recently assigned duty as main-mast-man in his watch, looking to the gear belayed at the rail roundabout that great spar near the deck. At off-times the fore-topman had picked up some acquaintance with him, and now in his trouble it occurred to him that he might be the sort of person to go to for wise counsel. He was an old Dansker long anglicized in the service, of few words, many wrinkles and some honorable scars. His wizened face, time-tinted and weather-stained to the complexion of an antique parchment, was here and there peppered blue by the chance explosion of a gun-cartridge in action. He was an *Agamemnon*-man; some two years prior to the time of this story having served under Nelson when but Sir Horatio in that ship immortal in naval memory, and which[,] dismantled and in part broken up to her bare ribs[,] is seen a grand skeleton in Haydon's<sup>4</sup> etching. As one of a boarding-party from the *Agamemnon* he had received a cut slantwise along one temple and cheek leaving a long pale scar like a streak of dawn's light falling athwart the dark visage. It was on account of that scar and the affair in which it was known that he had received it, as well as from his blue-peppered complexion that the Dansker went among the *Indomitable's* crew by the name of "Board-her-in-the-smoke."

Now the first time that his small weazel-eyes happened to light on Billy Budd, a certain grim internal merriment set all his ancient wrinkles into antic play. Was it that his eccentric unsentimental old sapience primitive in its kind saw or thought it saw something which in contrast with the war-ship's environment looked oddly incongruous in the handsome sailor? But after slyly studying him at intervals, the old Merlin's equivocal merriment was modified; for now when the twain would meet, it would start in his face a quizzing sort of look, but it would be but momentary and sometimes replaced by an expression of speculative query as to what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some man-traps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and address and without any touch of defensive ugliness, is of little avail; and where such innocence as man is capable of does yet in a moral emergency not always sharpen the faculties or enlighten the will.

4. Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846). English historical painter, much

praised by contemporary romantic writers.

However it was the Dansker in his ascetic way rather took to Billy. Nor was this only because of a certain philosophic interest in such a character. There was another cause. While the old man's eccentricities, sometimes bordering on the ursine, repelled the juniors, Billy, undeterred thereby, revering him as a salt hero would make advances, never passing the old Agamemnon-man without a salutation marked by that respect which is seldom lost on the aged however crabbed at times or whatever their station in life.

There was a vein of dry humor, or what not, in the mast-man; and, whether in freak of patriarchal irony touching Billy's youth and athletic frame, or for some other and more recondite reason, from the first in addressing him he always substituted Baby for Billy. The Dansker in fact being the originator of the name by which the foretopman eventually became known aboard ship.

Well then, in his mysterious little difficulty going in quest of the wrinkled one, Billy found him off duty in a dog-watch ruminating by himself seated on a shot-box of the upper gun-deck now and then surveying with a somewhat cynical regard certain of the more swaggering promenaders there. Billy recounted his trouble, again wondering how it all happened. The salt seer attentively listened, accompanying the foretopman's recital with queer twitchings of his wrinkles and problematical little sparkles of his small ferret eyes. Making an end of his story, the foretopman asked, "And now, Dansker, do tell me what you think of it."

The old man, shoving up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long slant scar at the point where it entered the thin hair, laconically said, "Baby Budd, *Jemmy Legs*"<sup>5</sup> (meaning the master-at-arms) "is down on you[.]"

"*Jemmy Legs!*" ejaculated Billy his welkin eyes expanding; "what for? Why he calls me *the sweet and pleasant young fellow*, they tell me."

"Does he so?" grinned the grizzled one; then said "Ay[,] Baby Lad[,] a sweet voice has *Jemmy Legs*."

"No, not always. But to me he has. I seldom pass him but there comes a pleasant word."

"And that's because he's down upon you, Baby Budd."

Such reiteration along with the manner of it, incomprehensible to a novice, disturbed Billy almost as much as the mystery for which he had sought explanation. Something less unpleasingly oracular he tried to extract; but the old sea-Chiron<sup>6</sup> thinking perhaps that for the nonce he had sufficiently instructed his young Achilles, pursed his lips, gathered all his wrinkles together and would commit himself to nothing further.

5. "*Jimmy-Legs*" is still a term of disparagement for the master-at-arms in the United States Navy.

6. In Greek myth, the wisest of the centaurs, skilled in healing, who befriended Achilles and other heroes.

Years, and those experiences which befall certain shrewder men subordinated life-long to the will of superiors, all this had developed in the Dansker the pithy guarded cynicism that was his leading characteristic.

10

The next day an incident served to confirm Billy Budd in his incredulity as to the Dansker's strange summing up of the case submitted. The ship at noon going large before the wind was rolling on her course, and he below at dinner and engaged in some sportful talk with the members of his mess, chanced in a sudden lurch to spill the entire contents of his soup-pan upon the new scrubbed deck. Claggart, the Master-at-arms, official rattan in hand, happened to be passing along the battery in a bay of which the mess was lodged, and the greasy liquid streamed just across his path. Stepping over it, he was proceeding on his way without comment, since the matter was nothing to take notice of under the circumstances, when he happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing, he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the sailor, but checked himself, and pointing down to the streaming soup, playfully tapped him from behind with his rattan, saying in a low musical voice peculiar to him at times "Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it too!" And with that passed on. Not noted by Billy as not coming within his view was the involuntary smile, or rather grimace, that accompanied Claggart's equivocal words. Aridly it drew down the thin corners of his shapely mouth. But everybody taking his remark as meant for humorous, and at which therefore as coming from a superior they were bound to laugh, "with counterfeited glee"<sup>7</sup> acted accordingly; and Billy tickled, it may be, by the allusion to his being the handsome sailor, merrily joined in; then addressing his messmates exclaimed "There now, who says that Jemmy Legs is down on me!" "And who said he was, Beauty?" demanded one Donald with some surprise. Whereat the foretopman looked a little foolish recalling that it was only one person, Board-her-in-the-smoke who had suggested what to him was the smoky idea that this master-at-arms was in any peculiar way hostile to him. Meantime that functionary resuming his path must have momentarily worn some expression less guarded than that of the bitter smile, and usurping the face from the heart, some distorting expression perhaps, for a drummer-boy heedlessly frolicking along from the opposite direction and chancing to come into light collision with his person was strangely disconcerted by his aspect. Nor was the impression lessened when the official impulsively giving him a sharp cut with the rattan, vehemently exclaimed "Look where you go!"

7. Cf. Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village," l. 201, relating to the severe schoolmaster.

What was the matter with the master-at-arms? And, be the matter what it might, how could it have direct relation to Billy Budd with whom prior to the affair of the spilled soup he had never come into any special contact official or otherwise? What indeed could the trouble have to do with one so little inclined to give offence as the merchant-ship's *peacemaker*, even him who in Claggart's own phrase was "the sweet and pleasant young fellow? ["'] Yes, why should *Jemmy Legs*, to borrow the Dansker's expression, be *down* on the Handsome Sailor? But, at heart and not for nothing, as the late chance encounter may indicate to the discerning, down on him, secretly down on him, he assuredly was.

Now to invent something touching the more private career of Claggart, something involving Billy Budd, of which something the latter should be wholly ignorant, some romantic incident implying that Claggart's knowledge of the young blue-jacket began at some period anterior to catching sight of him on board the seventy-four—all this, not so difficult to do, might avail in a way more or less interesting to account for whatever of enigma may appear to lurk in the case. But in fact there was nothing of the sort. And yet the cause, necessarily to be assumed as the sole one assignable, is in its very realism as much charged with that prime element of Radcliffian<sup>8</sup> romance, *the mysterious*, as any that the ingenuity of the author of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* could devise. For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be? if not called forth by this very harmlessness itself.

Now there can exist no irritating juxtaposition of dissimilar personalities comparable to that which is possible aboard a great war-ship fully manned and at sea. There, every day among all ranks almost every man comes into more or less of contact with almost every other man. Wholly there to avoid even the sight of an aggravating object one must needs give it Jonah's toss<sup>9</sup> or jump overboard himself. Imagine how all this might eventually operate on some peculiar human creature the direct reverse of a saint?

But for the adequate comprehending of Claggart by a normal nature these hints are insufficient. To pass from a normal nature to him one must cross "the deadly space between." And this is best done by indirection.

Long ago an honest scholar my senior, said to me in reference to one who like himself is now no more, a man so unimpeachably respectable that against him nothing was ever openly said tho' among

8. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), by Ann Radcliffe, was among the most popular of Gothic romances.

9. In the language of seafaring, the putting overboard of an unlucky person or object.

the few something was whispered, "Yes, X—— is a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady's fan. You are aware that I am the adherent of no organized religion much less of any philosophy built into a system. Well, for all that, I think that to try and get into X——, enter his labyrinth and get out again, without a clue derived from some source other than what is known as *knowledge of the world*—that were hardly possible, at least for me."

"Why" said I, "X——however singular a study to some, is yet human, and knowledge of the world assuredly implies the knowledge of human nature, and in most of its varieties."

"Yes, but a superficial knowledge of it, serving ordinary purposes. But for anything deeper, I am not certain whether to know the world and to know human nature be not two distinct branches of knowledge, which while they may coexist in the same heart, yet either may exist with little or nothing of the other. Nay, in an average man of the world, his constant rubbing with it blunts that fine spiritual insight indispensable to the understanding of the essential in certain exceptional characters, whether evil ones or good. In a matter of some importance I have seen a girl wind an old lawyer about her little finger. Nor was it the dotage of senile love. Nothing of the sort. But he knew law better than he knew the girl's heart. Coke and Blackstone<sup>1</sup> hardly shed so much light into obscure spiritual places as the Hebrew prophets. And who were they? Mostly recluses."

At the time my inexperience was such that I did not quite see the drift of all this. It may be that I see it now. And, indeed, if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular, one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain phenomenal men. As it is, one must turn to some authority not liable to the charge of being tinctured with the Biblical element.

In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: "Natural Depravity: a depravity according to nature." A definition which tho' savoring of Calvinism, by no means involves Calvin's dogmas as to total mankind. Evidently its intent makes it applicable but to individuals. Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply. At any rate for notable instances, since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality, one must go elsewhere. Civilization, especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to it. It folds itself in the mantle of respectability. It has its certain negative virtues serving as silent auxiliaries. It never allows wine to get within its guard. It is not going too far to say that it is without vices or small sins. There is a phenomenal pride in it that excludes them from anything mercenary or avaricious. In short the depravity here meant partakes nothing of the sordid or sensual. It is

1. *The Reports* and the *Institutes* of Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) and the *Commentaries* of Sir William Black-

stone (1723-1780) were the foundations of modern British and American jurisprudence.



serious, but free from acerbity. Though no flatterer of mankind it never speaks ill of it.

But the thing which in eminent instances signalizes so exceptional a nature is this: though the man's even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason, not the less in his heart he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law[,] having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational. That is to say: Toward the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of malignity would seem to partake of the insane, he will direct a cool judgement sagacious and sound.

These men are true madmen, and of the most dangerous sort, for their lunacy is not continuous but occasional[,] evoked by some special object; it is probably secretive, which is as much to say it is self-contained, so that when moreover, most active[,] it is to the average mind not distinguishable from sanity, and for the reason above suggested that whatever its aims may be, and the aim is never declared—the method and the outward proceeding are always perfectly rational.

Now something such an one was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short "a depravity according to nature."

12

*Lawyers, Experts, Clergy*  
*An Episode*

By the way, can it be the phenomenon, disowned or at least concealed, that in some criminal cases puzzles the courts? For this cause have our juries at times not only to endure the prolonged contentions of lawyers with their fees, but also the yet more perplexing strife of the medical experts with theirs?—But why leave it to them? why not subpoena as well the clerical proficient? Their vocation bringing them into peculiar contact with so many human beings, and sometimes in their least guarded hour, in interviews very much more confidential than those of physician and patient; this would seem to qualify them to know something about those intricacies involved in the question of moral responsibility; whether in a given case, say, the crime proceeded from mania in the brain or rabies of the heart. As to any differences among themselves these clerical proficient might develop on the stand, these could hardly be greater than the direct contradictions exchanged between the remunerated medical experts.

Dark sayings are these, some will say. But why? Is it because they somewhat savor of Holy Writ in its phrase "mysteries of iniquity"?<sup>2</sup> If they do, such savor was far from being intended for little will it

2. Cf. II Thessalonians ii: 7: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work \* \* \* " The words that follow

recognize a Satanic and active principle of evil in nature.

commend these pages to many a reader of to-day.

The point of the present story turning on the hidden nature of the master-at-arms has necessitated this chapter. With an added hint or two in connection with the incident at the mess, the resumed narrative must be left to vindicate, as it may, its own credibility.

## 13

*Pale ire, envy and despair*<sup>3</sup>

That Claggart's figure was not amiss, and his face, save the chin, well moulded, has already been said. Of these favorable points he seemed not insensible, for he was not only neat but careful in his dress. But the form of Billy Budd was heroic; and if his face was without the intellectual look of the pallid Claggart's, not the less was it lit, like his, from within, though from a different source. The bonfire in his heart made luminous the rose-tan in his cheek.

In view of the marked contrast between the persons of the twain, it is more than probable that when the master-at-arms in the scene last given applied to the sailor the proverb *Handsome is as handsome does*; he there let escape an ironic inkling, not caught by the young sailors who heard it, as to what it was that had first moved him against Billy, namely, his significant personal beauty.

Now envy and antipathy passions irreconcilable in reason, nevertheless in fact may spring conjoined like Chang and Eng<sup>4</sup> in one birth. Is Envy then such a monster? Well, though many an arraigned mortal has in hopes of mitigated penalty pleaded guilty to horrible actions, did ever anybody seriously confess to envy? Something there is in it universally felt to be more shameful than even felonious crime. And not only does everybody disown it but the better sort are inclined to incredulity when it is in earnest imputed to an intelligent man. But since its lodgement is in the heart not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it. But Claggart's was no vulgar form of the passion. Nor, as directed toward Billy Budd did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy that marred Saul's visage perturbedly brooding on the comely young David.<sup>5</sup> Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these [went] along with a nature that as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent. To him, the spirit lodged within Billy, and looking out from his welkin eyes as from windows, that ineffability it was which made the dimple in his dyed cheek, supplied his joints, and dancing in his yellow curls made him preeminently the Handsome Sailor. One per-

3. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, l. 115. Doomed to be man's evil betrayer, the tortured Satan approached Eden, "his face / Thrice changed with pale—ire, envy, and despair."

4. The original Siamese twins (1811-1874), first exhibited in the United States in 1829.

5. Cf. I Samuel xviii: 5-12.

son excepted the master-at-arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd. And the insight but intensified his passion, which assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynic disdain—disdain of innocence—To be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an æsthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despaired of it.

With no power to annul the elemental evil in him, tho readily enough he could hide it; apprehending the good, but powerless to be it; a nature like Claggart's surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted it.

14

Passion, and passion in its profoundest, is not a thing demanding a palatial stage whereon to play its part. Down among the ground-lings, among the beggars and rakers of the garbage, profound passion is enacted. And the circumstances that provoke it, however trivial or mean, are no measure of its power. In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun-deck, and one of the external provocations a man-of-war's-man's spilled soup.

Now when the Master-at-arms noticed whence came that greasy fluid streaming before his feet, he must have taken it—to some extent wilfully, perhaps—not for the mere accident it assuredly was, but for the sly escape of a spontaneous feeling on Billy's part more or less answering to the antipathy on his own. In effect a foolish demonstration he must have thought, and very harmless, like the futile kick of a heifer, which yet were the heifer a shod stallion, would not be so harmless. Even so was it that into the gall of Claggart's envy he infused the vitriol of his contempt. But the incident confirmed to him certain tell-tale reports purveyed to his ear by *Squcak*, one of his more cunning Corporals, a grizzled little man, so nicknamed by the sailors on account of his squacky voice, and sharp visage ferreting about the dark corners of the lower decks after interlopers, satirically suggesting to them the idea of a rat in a cellar.

From his Chief's employing him as an implicit tool in laying little traps for the worryment of the Foretopman—for it was from the Master-at-arms that the petty persecutions heretofore adverted to had proceeded—the corporal having naturally enough concluded that his master could have no love for the sailor, made it his business, faithful understrapper that he was, to foment the ill blood by perverting to his Chief certain innocent frolics of the good natured Foretopman, besides inventing for his mouth sundry contumelious epithets he claimed to have overheard him let fall. The Master-at-arms never

suspected the veracity of these reports, more especially as to the epithets, for he well knew how secretly unpopular may become a master-at-arms[.], at least a master-at-arms of those days zealous in his function, and how the blue-jackets shoot at him in private their raillery and wit: the nickname by which he goes among them (*Jemmy Legs*) implying under the form of merriment their cherished disrespect and dislike.

But in view of the greediness of hate for patrolmen it hardly needed a purveyor to feed Claggart's passion. An uncommon prudence is habitual with the subtler depravity, for it has everything to hide. And in case of an injury but suspected, its secretiveness voluntarily cuts it off from enlightenment or disillusion; and, not unreluctantly, action is taken upon surmise as upon certainty. And the retaliation is apt to be in monstrous disproportion to the supposed offence; for when in anybody was revenge in its exactions aught else but an inordinate usurer. But how with Claggart's conscience? For though consciences are unlike as foreheads, every intelligence, not excluding the Scriptural devils who "believe and tremble," has one. But Claggart's conscience being but the lawyer to his will, made ogres of trifles, probably arguing that the motive imputed to Billy in spilling the soup just when he did, together with the epithets alleged, these, if nothing more, made a strong case against him; nay, justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness. The Pharisee is the Guy Fawkes<sup>6</sup> prowling in the hid chambers underlying the Claggarts. And they can really form no conception of an unreciprocated malice. Probably, the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man; but it had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of or even pervert into plausible self-justification; so that the occurrence at the mess, petty if it were, was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart; And, for the rest, not improbably it put him upon new experiments.

## 15

Not many days after the last incident narrated something befell Billy Budd that more gravelled him than aught that had previously occurred.

It was a warm night for the latitude; and the Foretopman, whose watch at the time was properly below, was dozing on the uppermost deck whither he had ascended from his hot hammock one of hundreds suspended so closely wedged together over a lower gun-deck that there was little or no swing to them. He lay as in the shadow of a hill-side, stretched under the lee of the booms, a piled ridge of spare spars amidships between foremast and mainmast and among

6. Principal conspirator in the Gunpowder Plot (1604-1605) to blow up the British Houses of Parliament.

which the ship's largest boat, the launch, was stowed. Alongside of three other slumberers from below, he lay near that end of the booms which approaches the foremast; his station aloft on duty as a foretopman being just over the deck-station of the forecastle-men, entitling him according to usage to make himself more or less at home in that neighborhood.

Presently he was stirred into semi-consciousness by somebody, who must have previously sounded the sleep of the others, touching his shoulder, and then as the Foretopman raised his head, breathing into his ear in a quick whisper, "Slip into the lee forechains, Billy; there is something in the wind. Don't speak. Quick, I will meet you there;" and disappeared.

Now Billy like sundry other essentially good-natured ones had some of the weaknesses inseparable from essential good nature; and among these was a reluctance, almost an incapacity of plumply saying *no* to an abrupt proposition not obviously absurd, on the face of it, nor obviously unfriendly, nor iniquitous. And being of warm blood he had not the phlegm tacitly to negative any proposition by unresponsive inaction. Like his sense of fear, his apprehension as to aught outside of the honest and natural was seldom very quick. Besides, upon the present occasion, the drowse from his sleep still hung upon him.

However it was, he mechanically rose, and sleepily wondering what could be in the wind, betook himself to the designated place, a narrow platform, one of six, outside of the high bulwarks and screened by the great dead-eyes and multiple columned lanyards of the shrouds and back-stays; and, in a great war-ship of that time, of dimensions commensurate [with the] hull's magnitude; a tarry balcony in short overhanging the sea, and so secluded that one mariner of the *Indomitable*, a non-conformist old tar of a serious turn, made it even in daytime his private oratory.

In this retired nook the stranger soon joined Billy Budd. There was no moon as yet; a haze obscured the star-light. He could not distinctly see the stranger's face. Yet from something in the outline and carriage, Billy took him to be, and correctly, for one of the after-guard.

"Hist! Billy," said the man in the same quick cautionary whisper as before; "You were impressed, weren't you? Well, so was I"; and he paused, as to mark the effect. But Billy not knowing exactly what to make of this said nothing. Then the other: "We are not the only impressed ones, Billy. There's a gang of us.—Couldn't you—help—at a pinch? [""]

"What do you mean? [""] demanded Billy here thoroughly shaking off his drowse.

"Hist, hist! [""] the hurried whisper now growing husky, [""]see

here"; and the man held up two small objects faintly twinkling in the nightlight; "see, they are yours, Billy, if you'll only—"

But Billy broke in, and in his resentful eagerness to deliver himself his vocal infirmity somewhat intruded: "D-D-Damme, I don't know what you are d-d-driving at, or what you mean, but you had better g-g-go where you belong!" For the moment the fellow, as confounded, did not stir; and Billy springing to his feet, said "If you d-don't start I'll t-t-toss you back over the r-r-rail!" There was no mistaking this and the mysterious emissary decamped disappearing in the direction of the mainmast in the shadow of the booms.

"Hallo, what's the matter?" here came growling from a forecastle-man awakened from his deck-dozz by Billy's raised voice. And as the foretopman reappeared and was recognized by him; "Ah, *Beauty*, is it you? Well, something must have been the matter for you st-st-stuttered."

"O," rejoined Billy, now mastering the impediment; "I found an afterguardsman in our part of the ship here and I bid him be off where he belongs."

"And is that all you did about it, foretopman?" gruffly demanded another, an irascible old fellow of brick-colored visage and hair, and who was known to his associate forecastle-men as *Red Pepper*; "Such sneaks I should like to marry to the gunner's daughter!" by that expression meaning that he would like to subject them to disciplinary castigation over a gun.

However, Billy's rendering of the matter satisfactorily accounted to these inquirers for the brief commotion, since of all the sections of a ship's company the forecastle-men, veterans for the most part and bigoted in their sea-prejudices, are the most jealous in resenting territorial encroachments, especially on the part of any of the afterguard, of whom they have but a sorry opinion, chiefly landsmen, never going aloft except to reef or furl the mainsail, and in no wise competent to handle a marlinspike or turn in a *dead-eye*, say.

## 16

This incident sorely puzzled Billy Budd. It was an entirely new experience; the first time in his life that he had ever been personally approached in underhand intriguing fashion. Prior to this encounter he had known nothing of the afterguardsman, the two men being stationed wide apart, one forward and aloft during his watch, the other on deck and aft.

What could it mean? And could they really be guineas, those two glittering objects the interloper had held up to his (Billy's)<sup>7</sup> eyes? Where could the fellow get guineas? Why even buttons spare

7. The manuscript reads, "up to his (Billy's) eyes," in appearance suggesting the cancellation of "(Billy's)."

buttons<sup>8</sup> are not so plentiful at sea. The more he turned the matter over, the more he was non-plussed, and made uneasy and discomforted. In his disgustful recoil from an overture which tho' he but ill comprehended he instinctively knew must involve evil of some sort, Billy Budd was like a young horse fresh from the pasture suddenly inhaling a vile whiff from some chemical factory and by repeated snortings tries to get it out of his nostrils and lungs. This frame of mind barred all desire of holding further parley with the fellow, even were it but for the purpose of gaining some enlightenment as to his design in approaching him. And yet he was not without natural curiosity to see how such a visitor in the dark would look in broad day.

He espied him the following afternoon in his first dog-watch below[.], one of the smokers on that forward part of the upper gun deck allotted to the pipe.<sup>9</sup> He recognized him by his general cut and build, more than by his round freckled face and glassy eyes of pale blue, veiled with lashes all but white. And yet Billy was a bit uncertain whether indeed it were he—yonder chap about his own age chatting and laughing in free-hearted way, leaning against a gun; a genial young fellow enough to look at, and something of a rattle-brain, to all appearance. Rather chubby too for a sailor even an afterguardsman. In short the last man in the world, one would think, to be overburthened with thoughts, especially those perilous thoughts that must needs belong to a conspirator in any serious project, or even to the underling of such a conspirator.

Altho' Billy was not aware of it, the fellow, with a side-long watchful glance had perceived Billy first, and then noting that Billy was looking at him, thereupon nodded a familiar sort of friendly recognition as to an old acquaintance, without interrupting the talk he was engaged in with the group of smokers. A day or two afterwards chancing in the evening promenade on a gun deck, to pass Billy, he offered a flying word of good-fellowship as it were, which by its unexpectedness, and equivocalness under the circumstances so embarrassed Billy that he knew not how to respond to it, and let it go unnoticed.

Billy was now left more at a loss than before. The ineffectual speculation into which he was led was so disturbingly alien to him that he did his best to smother [it]. It never entered his mind that here was a matter which from its extreme questionableness, it was his duty as a loyal blue-jacket to report in the proper quarter. And, probably, had such a step been suggested to him, he would have been deterred from taking it by the thought, one of novice-magnanimity, that it would savor overmuch of the dirty work of a tell-tale. He kept the

8. The manuscript reads, "even buttons spare buttons," in appearance suggesting the cancellation of the first "buttons."

9. A portion of the forward gun deck where the sailors were allowed to smoke.

thing to himself. Yet upon one occasion, he could not forbear a little disburthening himself to the old Dansker, tempted thereto perhaps by the influence of a balmy night when the ship lay becalmed; the twain, silent for the most part, sitting together on deck, their heads propped against the bulwarks. But it was only a partial and anonymous account that Billy gave, the unfounded scruples above referred to preventing full disclosure to anybody. Upon hearing Billy's version, the sage Dansker seemed to divine more than he was told; and after a little meditation during which his wrinkles were pursed as into a point, quite effacing for the time that quizzing expression his face sometimes wore,—“Didn't I say so, Baby Budd?”

“Say what?” demanded Billy.

“Why, *Jemmy Legs* is down on you.”

“And what” rejoined Billy in amazement, “has *Jemmy Legs* to do with that cracked afterguardsman?”

“Ho, it was an afterguardsman then. A cat's-paw, a cat's-paw!” And with that exclamation, which, whether it had reference to a light puff of air just then coming over the calm sea, or subtler relation to the afterguardsman, there is no telling, the old Merlin gave a twisting wrench with his black teeth at his plug of tobacco, vouchsafing no reply to Billy's impetuous question, tho' now repeated, for it was his wont to relapse into grim silence when interrogated in skeptical sort as to any of his sententious oracles, not always very clear ones, rather partaking of that obscurity which invests most Delphic deliverances from any quarter.

Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught and never gives advice.

17

Yes, despite the Dansker's pithy insistence as to the Master-at-arms being at the bottom of these strange experiences of Billy on board the *Indomitable*, the young sailor was ready to ascribe them to almost anybody but the man who, to use Billy's own expression, “always had a pleasant word for him.” This is to be wondered at. Yet not so much to be wondered at. In certain matters, some sailors even in mature life remain unsophisticated enough. But a young seafarer of the disposition of our athletic Foretopman, is much of a child-man. And yet a child's utter innocence is but its blank ignorance, and the innocence more or less wanes as intelligence waxes. But in Billy Budd intelligence, such as it was, had advanced, while yet his simple mindedness remained for the most part unaffected. Experience is a teacher indeed; yet did Billy's years make his experience small. Besides, he had none of that intuitive knowledge of the bad which in natures not good or incompletely so foreruns experience, and therefore may pertain, as in some instances it too clearly does pertain, even to youth.

And what could Billy know of man except of man as a mere sailor?



And the old-fashioned sailor, the veritable man-before-the-mast, the sailor from boyhood up, he, tho' indeed of the same species as a landsman is in some respects singularly distinct from him. The sailor is frankness, the landsman is finesse. Life is not a game with the sailor, demanding the long head; no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straightforwardness, and ends are attained by indirection; an oblique, tedious, barren game hardly worth that poor candle burnt out in playing it.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, as a class, sailors are in character a juvenile race. Even their deviations are marked by juvenility. And this more especially holding true with the sailors of Billy's time. Then, too, certain things which apply to all sailors, do more pointedly operate here and there, upon the junior one. Every sailor, too is accustomed to obey orders without debating them; his life afloat is externally ruled for him; he is not brought into that promiscuous commerce with mankind where unobstructed free agency on equal terms—equal superficially, at least—soon teaches one that unless upon occasion he exercise a distrust keen in proportion to the fairness of the appearance, some foul turn may be served him. A ruled undemonstrative distrustfulness is so habitual, not with business-men so much, as with men who know their kind in less shallow relations than business, namely, certain men-of-the-world, that they come at last to employ it all but unconsciously; and some of them would very likely feel real surprise at being charged with it as one of their general characteristics.

18

But after the little matter at the mess Billy Budd no more found himself in strange trouble at times about his hammock or his clothes-bag or what not. While, as to that smile that occasionally sunned him, and the pleasant passing word, these were if not more frequent, yet if anything more pronounced than before.

But for all that, there were certain other demonstrations now. When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy rolling along the upper gun-deck in the leisure of the second dog-watch exchanging passing broadsides of fun with other young promenaders in the crowd; that glance would follow the cheerful sea-Hyperion<sup>2</sup> with a settled meditative and melancholy expression, his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary sem-

1. Cf. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act V, Scene 5, ll. 15-17.

2. In early Greek myth, the Titan

Helios, god of the sun; later identified with Apollo, god of manly youth and beauty.

blance of a wrinkled walnut. But sometimes catching sight in advance of the foretopman coming in his direction, he would, upon their nearing, step aside a little to let him pass, dwelling upon Billy for the moment with the glittering dental satire of a Guise.<sup>3</sup> But upon any abrupt unforeseen encounter a red light would [flash] forth from his eye like a spark from an anvil in a dusk smithy. That quick fierce light was a strange one, darted from orbs which in repose were of a color nearest approaching a deeper violet, the softest of shades.

Tho' some of these caprices of the pit could not but be observed by their object, yet were they beyond the construing of such a nature. And the *thews* of Billy were hardly compatible with that sort of sensitive spiritual organisation which in some cases instinctively conveys to ignorant innocence an admonition of the proximity of the malign. He thought the Master-at-arms acted in a manner rather queer at times. That was all. But the occasional frank air and pleasant word went for what they purported to be, the young sailor never having heard as yet of the "too fair-spoken man."

Had the foretopman been conscious of having done or said anything to provoke the ill will of the official, it would have been different with him, and his sight might have been purged if not sharpened. As it was[,] innocence was his blinder.

So was it with him in yet another matter. Two minor officers—the Armorer and Captain of the Hold, with whom he had never exchanged a word, his position in the ship not bringing him into contact with them; these men now for the first began to cast upon Billy when they chanced to encounter him, that peculiar glance which evidences that the man from whom it comes has been some way tampered with and to the prejudice of him upon whom the glance lights. Never did it occur to Billy as a thing to be noted or a thing suspicious, tho' he well knew the fact, that the Armorer and Captain of the Hold, with the ship's-yeoman, apothecary, and others of that grade, were by naval usage, mess-mates of the master-at-arms, men with ears convenient to his confidential tongue.

But the general popularity that our *Handsome Sailor's* manly forwardness upon occasion, and [his] irresistible good nature[,] indicating no mental superiority tending to excite an invidious feeling; this good will on the part of most of his shipmates made him the less to concern himself about such mute aspects toward him as those whereto allusion has just been made.

As to the afterguardsman, tho' Billy for reasons already given necessarily saw little of him, yet when the two did happen to meet, invariably came the fellow's off-hand cheerful recognition, sometimes ac-

3. The Guises, a powerful ducal family of France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, engaged in violent intrigues attractive to romancers, for ex-

ample Dumas. As for the "glittering dental satire," cf. Hamlet's discovery "that one may smile \* \* \* and be a villain" (Act I, Scene 5, ll. 103-105).

accompanied by a passing pleasant word or two. Whatever that equivocal young person's original design may really have been, or the design of which he might have been the deputy, certain it was from his manner upon these occasions, that he had wholly dropped it.

It was as if his precocity of crookedness (and every vulgar villain is precocious) had for once deceived him, and the man he had sought to entrap as a simpleton had, through his very simplicity ignorantly baffled him.

But shrewd ones may opine that it was hardly possible for Billy to refrain from going up to the afterguardsman and bluntly demanding to know his purpose in the initial interview, so abruptly closed in the fore-chains. Shrewd ones may also think it but natural in Billy to set about sounding some of the other impressed men of the ship in order to discover what basis, if any, there was for the emissary's obscure suggestions as to plotting disaffection aboard. Yes, [the] shrewd may so think. But something more, or rather, something else than mere shrewdness is perhaps needful for the due understanding of such a character as Billy Budd's.

As to Claggart, the monomania in the man—if that indeed it were—as involuntarily disclosed by starts in the manifestations detailed, yet in general covered over by his self-contained and rational demeanor; this, like a subterranean fire was eating its way deeper and deeper in him. Something decisive must come of it.

19

After the mysterious interview in the fore-chains, the one so abruptly ended there by Billy, nothing especially German<sup>4</sup> to the story occurred until the events now about to be narrated.

Elsewhere it has been said that in the lack of frigates (of course better sailers than line-of-battle ships) in the English squadron up the Straits at that period, the *Indomitable* was occasionally employed not only as an available substitute for a scout, but at times on detached service of more important kind. This was not alone because of her sailing qualities, not common in a ship of her rate, but quite as much, probably, that the character of her commander, it was thought, specially adapted him for any duty where under unforeseen difficulties a prompt initiative might have to be taken in some matter demanding knowledge and ability in addition to those qualities implied in good seamanship. It was on an expedition of the latter sort, a somewhat distant one, and when the *Indomitable* was almost at her furthest remove from the fleet that in the latter part of an afternoon-watch she unexpectedly came in sight of a ship of the enemy. It proved to be a frigate. The latter perceiving thro' the glass that the weight of men and metal would be heavily against her, invoking her light heels crowded sail to get away. After a chase urged almost against hope

4. Cf. "germane," meaning "akin."

and lasting until about the middle of the first dog-watch, she signally succeeded in effecting her escape.

Not long after the pursuit had been given up, and ere the excitement thereto had altogether waned away, the Master-at-Arms ascending from his cavernous sphere made his appearance cap in hand by the mainmast respectfully waiting the notice of Captain Vere then solitary walking the weather-side of the quarter-deck, doubtless somewhat chafed at the failure of the pursuit. The spot where Claggart stood was the place allotted to men of lesser grades seeking some more particular interview either with the officer-of-the-deck or the Captain himself. But from the latter it was not often that a sailor or petty-officer of those days would seek a hearing; only some exceptional cause, would, according to established custom, have warranted that.

Presently, just as the Commander absorbed in his reflections was on the point of turning aft in his promenade, he became sensible of Claggart's presence, and saw the doffed cap held in deferential expectancy. Here be it said that Captain Vere's personal knowledge of this petty-officer had only begun at the time of the ship's last sailing from home, Claggart then for the first, in transfer from a ship detained for repairs, supplying on board the *Indomitable* the place of a previous master-at-arms disabled and ashore.

No sooner did the Commander observe who it was that now deferentially stood awaiting his notice, than a peculiar expression came over him. It was not unlike that which uncontrollably will flit across the countenance of one at unawares encountering a person who though known to him indeed has hardly been long enough known for thorough knowledge, but something in whose aspect nevertheless now for the first provokes a vaguely repellent distaste. But coming to a stand, and resuming much of his wonted official manner, save that a sort of impatience lurked in the intonation of the opening word, he said "Well? what is it, Master-at-Arms?"

With the air of a subordinate grieved at the necessity of being a messenger of ill tidings, and while conscientiously determined to be frank, yet equally resolved upon shunning overstatement, Claggart at this invitation or rather summons to disburthen, spoke up. What he said, conveyed in the language of no uneducated man, was to the effect following if not altogether in these words, namely, that during the chase and preparations for the possible encounter he had seen enough to convince him that at least one sailor aboard was a dangerous character in a ship mustering some who not only had taken a guilty part in the late serious troubles, but others also who, like the man in question, had entered His Majesty's service under another form than enlistment.

At this point Captain Vere with some impatience, interrupted him:

"Be direct, man; say impressed men."

Claggart made a gesture of subservience, and proceeded.

Quite lately he (Claggart) had begun to suspect that on the gun-decks some sort of movement prompted by the sailor in question was covertly going on, but he had not thought himself warranted in reporting the suspicion so long as it remained indistinct. But from what he had that afternoon observed in the man referred to the suspicion of something clandestine going on had advanced to a point less removed from certainty. He deeply felt, he added, the serious responsibility assumed in making a report involving such possible consequences to the individual mainly concerned, besides tending to augment those natural anxieties which every naval commander must feel in view of extraordinary outbreaks so recent as those which, he sorrowfully said it, it needed not to name.

Now at the first broaching of the matter Captain Vere taken by surprise could not wholly dissemble his disquietude. But as Claggart went on, the former's aspect changed into restiveness under something in the witness' manner in giving his testimony. However, he refrained from interrupting him. And Claggart, continuing, concluded with this:

"God forbid, your honor, that the *Indomitable's* should be the experience of the—"

"Never mind that!" here peremptorily broke in the superior, his face altering with anger, instinctively divining the ship that the other was about to name, one in which the *Nore* Mutiny had assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardized the life of its commander. Under the circumstances he was indignant at the purposed allusion. When the commissioned officers themselves were on all occasions very heedful how they referred to the recent events, for a petty-officer unnecessarily to allude to them in the presence of his Captain, this struck him as a most immodest presumption. Besides, to his quick sense of self-respect, it even looked under the circumstances something like an attempt to alarm him. Nor at first was he without some surprise that one who so far as he had hitherto come under his notice had shown considerable tact in his function should in this particular evince such lack of it.

But these thoughts and kindred dubious ones flitting across his mind were suddenly replaced by an intuitional surmise which though as yet obscure in form served practically to affect his reception of the ill tidings. Certain it is, that long versed in everything pertaining to the complicated gun-deck life, which like every other form of life, has its secret mines and dubious side, the side popularly disclaimed, Captain Vere did not permit himself to be unduly disturbed by the general tenor of his subordinate's report. Furthermore, if in view of recent events prompt action should be taken at the first palpable sign

of recurring insubordination, for all that, not judicious would it be, he thought, to keep the idea of lingering disaffection alive by undue forwardness in crediting an informer even if his own subordinate and charged among other things with police surveillance of the crew. This feeling would not perhaps have so prevailed with him were it not that upon a prior occasion the patriotic zeal officially evinced by Claggart had somewhat irritated him as appearing rather supersensible and strained. Furthermore, something even in the official's self-possessed and somewhat ostentatious manner in making his specifications strangely reminded him of a bandsman, a perjurous witness in a capital case before a court-martial ashore of which when a lieutenant he Captain Vere had been a member.

Now the peremptory check given to Claggart in the matter of the arrested allusion was quickly followed up by this: "You say that there is at least one dangerous man aboard. Name him."

"William Budd. A foretopman, your honor—"

"William Budd" repeated Captain Vere with unfeigned astonishment; "and mean you the man that Lieutenant Ratcliffe took from the merchantman not very long ago—the young fellow who seems to be so popular with the men—Billy, the Handsome Sailor, as they call him? ["]

"The same, your honor; but for all his youth and good looks, a deep one. Not for nothing does he insinuate himself into the good will of his shipmates, since at the least all hands will at a pinch say a good word for him at all hazards. Did Lieutenant Ratcliffe happen to tell your honor of that adroit fling of Budd's, jumping up in the cutter's bow under the merchantman's stern when he was being taken off? It is even masqued by that sort of good humored air that at heart he resents his impressment. You have but noted his fair cheek. A man-trap may be under his ruddy-tipped daisies."

Now the *Handsome Sailor* as a signal figure among the crew had naturally enough attracted the Captain's attention from the first. Tho' in general not very demonstrative to his officers, he had congratulated Lieutenant Ratcliffe upon his good fortune in lighting on such a fine specimen of the genus homo, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall.

As to Billy's adieu to the ship *Rights-of-Man*, which the boarding lieutenant had indeed reported to him but in a deferential way more as a good story than aught else, Captain Vere[,] tho' mistakenly understanding it as a satiric sally, had but thought so much the better of the impressed man for it; as a military sailor, admiring the spirit that could take an arbitrary enlistment so merrily and sensibly. The foretopman's conduct, too, so far as it had fallen under the Captain's notice had confirmed the first happy augury, while the new recruit's qualities as a *sailor-man* seemed to be such that he had thought of

recommending him to the executive officer for promotion to a place that would more frequently bring him under his own observation, namely, the captaincy of the mizzen-top, replacing there in the star-board watch a man not so young whom partly for that reason he deemed less fitted for the post. Be it parenthesized here that since the mizzen-top-men having not to handle such breadths of heavy canvas as the lower sails on the main-mast and fore-mast, a young man if of the right stuff not only seems best adapted to duty there, but in fact is generally selected for the captaincy of that top, and the company under him are light hands and often but striplings. In sum, Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the time was called a "*King's bargain*["] that is to say, for His Britannic Majesty's navy a capital investment at small outlay or none at all.

After a brief pause during which the reminiscences above mentioned passed vividly through his mind and he weighed the import of Claggart's last suggestion conveyed in the phrase "pitfall under the clover,"<sup>5</sup> and the more he weighed it the less reliance he felt in the informer's good faith. Suddenly<sup>6</sup> he turned upon him and in a low voice: "Do you come to me, master-at-arms[,] with so foggy a tale? As to Budd, cite me an act or spoken word of his confirmatory of what you in general charge against him. Stay," drawing nearer to him "heed what you speak. Just now, and in a case like this, there is a yard-arm-end for the false-witness."

"Ah, your honor!" sighed Claggart mildly shaking his shapely head as in sad deprecation of such unmerited severity of tone. Then, bridling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion, he circumstantially alleged certain words and acts, which collectively, if credited, led to presumptions mortally inculcating Budd. And for some of these averments, he added, substantiating proof was not far.

With gray eyes impatient and distrustful essaying to fathom to the bottom Claggart's calm violet ones, Captain Vere again heard him out; then for the moment stood ruminating. The mood he evinced, Claggart—himself for the time liberated from the other's scrutiny—steadily regarded with a look difficult to render,—a look curious of the operation of his tactics, a look such as might have been that of the spokesman of the envious children of Jacob deceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood-dyed coat of young Joseph.<sup>7</sup>

5. Cf. "A man-trap \* \* \* under his \* \* \* daisies," ending the third paragraph above. There Melville had first written, then canceled, "a pitfall under his ruddy clover," the words that Captain Vere remembers here. The discrepancy might have been corrected had

Melville seen the manuscript through press.

6. The manuscript here reads, "good faith, suddenly \* \* \*," an obvious comma splice between two sentences, which has been altered for this edition, as in the first edition.

7. Genesis xxxvii: 11-33

Though something exceptional in the moral quality of Captain Vere made him, in earnest encounter with a fellow-man, a veritable touch-stone of that man's essential nature, yet now as to Claggart and what was really going on in him his feeling partook less of intuition conviction than of strong suspicion clogged by strange dubieties. The perplexity he evinced proceeded less from aught touching the man informed against—as Claggart doubtless opined—than from considerations how best to act in regard to the informer. At first indeed he was naturally for summoning that substantiation of his allegations which Claggart said was at hand. But such a proceeding would result in the matter at once getting abroad, which in the present stage of it, he thought, might undesirably affect the ship's company. If Claggart was a false witness,—that closed the affair. And therefore before trying the accusation, he would first practically test the accuser; and he thought this could be done in a quiet undemonstrative way.

The measure he determined upon involved a shifting of the scene, a transfer to a place less exposed to observation than the broad quarter-deck. For although the few gun-room officers there at the time had, in due observance of naval etiquette, withdrawn to leeward the moment Captain Vere had begun his promenade on the deck's weather-side; and tho' during the colloquy with Claggart they of course ventured not to diminish the distance; and though throughout the interview Captain Vere's voice was far from high, and Claggart's silvery and low; and the wind in the cordage and the wash of the sea helped the more to put them beyond ear-shot; nevertheless, the interview's continuance already had attracted observation from some topmen aloft and other sailors in the waist or further forward.

Having determined upon his measures, Captain Vere forthwith took action. Abruptly turning to Claggart he asked "Master-at-arms, is it now Budd's watch aloft?"

"No, your honor." Whereupon, "Mr. Wilkes!" summoning the nearest midshipman, "tell Albert to come to me." Albert was the Captain's hammock-boy, a sort of sea-valet in whose discretion and fidelity his master had much confidence. The lad appeared. "You know Budd the foretopman?"

"I do, Sir."

"Go find him. It is his watch off. Manage to tell him out of ear-shot that he is wanted aft. Contrive it that he speaks to nobody. Keep him in talk yourself. And not till you get well aft here, not till then let him know that the place where he is wanted is my cabin. You understand. Go.—Master-at-Arms, show yourself on the decks below, and when you think it time for Albert to be coming with his man, stand by quietly to follow the sailor in."



Now when the foretopman found himself closeted there, as it were, in the cabin with the Captain and Claggart, he was surprised enough. But it was a surprise unaccompanied by apprehension or distrust. To an immature nature essentially honest and humane, forewarning intimations of subtler danger from one's kind come tardily if at all. The only thing that took shape in the young sailor's mind was this: Yes, the Captain, I have always thought, looks kindly upon me. Wonder if he's going to make me his coxswain. I should like that. And maybe now he is going to ask the master-at-arms about me.

"Shut the door there, sentry," said the commander; "stand without, and let nobody come in.—Now, master-at-arms, tell this man to his face what you told of him to me;" and stood prepared to scrutinize the mutually confronting visages.

With the measured step and calm collected air of an asylum-physician approaching in the public hall some patient beginning to show indications of a coming paroxysm, Claggart deliberately advanced within short range of Billy, and mesmerically looking him in the eye, briefly recapitulated the accusation.

Not at first did Billy take it in. When he did, the rose-tan of his cheek looked struck as by white leprosy. He stood like one impaled and gagged. Meanwhile the accuser's eyes removing not as yet from the blue dilated ones, underwent a phenomenal change, their wonted rich violet color blurring into a muddy purple. Those lights of human intelligence losing human expression, gelidly protruding like the alien eyes of certain uncatalogued creatures of the deep. The first mesmeric glance was one of serpent fascination; the last was as the hungry lurch of the torpedo-fish.

"Speak, man!" said Captain Vere to the transfixed one struck by his aspect even more than by Claggart's, "Speak! defend yourself." Which appeal caused but a strange dumb gesturing and gurgling in Billy; amazement at such an accusation so suddenly sprung on inexperienced nonage; this, and, it may be horror of the accuser, serving to bring out his lurking defect and in this instance for the time intensifying it into a convulsed tongue-tie; while the intent head and entire form straining forward in an agony of ineffectual eagerness to obey the injunction to speak and defend himself, gave an expression to the face like that of a condemned Vestal priestess in the moment of being buried alive, and in the first struggle against suffocation.

Though at the time Captain Vere was quite ignorant of Billy's liability to vocal impediment, he now immediately divined it, since vividly Billy's aspect recalled to him that of a bright young school-

mate of his whom he had once seen struck by much the same startling impotence in the act of eagerly rising in the class to be foremost in response to a testing question put to it by the master. Going close up to the young sailor, and laying a soothing hand on his shoulder, he said[:] "There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time, take your time." Contrary to the effect intended, these words so fatherly in tone, doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick, prompted yet more violent efforts at utterance—efforts soon ending for the time in confirming the paralysis, and bringing to his face an expression which was as a crucifixion to behold. The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night, his right arm shot out, and Claggart dropped to the deck. Whether intentionally or but owing to the young athlete's superior height, the blow had taken effect full upon the forehead, so shapely and intellectual-looking a feature in the master-at-arms; so that the body fell over lengthwise, like a heavy plank tilted from erectness. A gasp or two, and he lay motionless.

"Fated boy," breathed Captain Vere in tone so low as to be almost a whisper, "what have you done! But here, help me."

The twain raised the felled one from the loins up into a sitting position. The spare form flexibly acquiesced, but inertly. It was like handling a dead snake. They lowered it back. Regaining erectness Captain Vere with one hand covering his face stood to all appearance as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking in all the bearings of the event and what was best not only now at once to be done, but also in the sequel? Slowly he uncovered his face; and the effect was as if the moon emerging from eclipse should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian. In his official tone he bade the forctopman retire to a state-room aft, (pointing it out) and there remain till thence summoned. This order Billy in silence mechanically obeyed. Then going to the cabin-door where it opened on the quarter-deck, Captain Vere said to the sentry without, "Tell somebody to send Albert here." When the lad appeared his master so contrived it that he should not catch sight of the prone one. "Albert," he said to him, "tell the Surgeon I wish to see him. You need not come back till called." When the Surgeon entered—a self-poised character of that grave sense and experience that hardly anything could take him aback,—Captain Vere advanced to meet him, thus unconsciously intercepting his view of Claggart and interrupting the other's wonted ceremonious salutation, said, "Nay; tell me how it is with yonder man," directing his attention to the prostrate one.

The Surgeon looked, and for all his self-command, somewhat

started at the abrupt revelation. On Claggart's always pallid complexion, thick black blood was now oozing from nostril and ear. To the gazer's professional eye it was unmistakably no living man that he saw.

"Is it so then?["] said Captain Vere intently watching him. "I thought it. But verify it." Whereupon the customary tests confirmed the Surgeon's first glance, who now looking up in unfeigned concern, cast a look of intense inquisitiveness upon his superior. But Captain Vere, with one hand to his brow, was standing motionless. Suddenly, catching the Surgeon's arm convulsively, he exclaimed, pointing down to the body—"It is the divine judgment on Ananias!\*" Look!"

Disturbed by the excited manner he had never before observed in the *Indomitable's* Captain, and as yet wholly ignorant of the affair, the prudent Surgeon nevertheless held his peace, only again looking an earnest interrogation as to what it was that had resulted in such a tragedy.

But Captain Vere was now again motionless standing absorbed in thought. But again starting, he vehemently exclaimed—"Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!["]

At these passionate interjections, mere incoherences to the listener as yet unapprised of the antecedents, the Surgeon was profoundly discomposed. But now as recollecting himself, Captain Vere in less harsh tone briefly related the circumstances leading up to the event.

["]But come; we must despatch" he added. ["]Help me to remove him (meaning the body) to yonder compartment,["] designating one opposite that where the foretopman remained immured. Anew disturbed by a request that as implying a desire for secrecy, seemed unaccountably strange to him, there was nothing for the subordinate to do but comply.

"Go now" said Captain Vere with something of his wonted manner—["]Go now. I shall presently call a drum-head court. Tell the lieutenants what has happened, and tell Mr. Mordant," meaning the captain of marines, "and charge them to keep the matter to themselves."

21

Full of disquietude and misgiving the Surgeon left the cabin. Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind, or was it but a transient excitement, brought about by so strange and extraordinary a happening? As to the drum-head court, it struck the Surgeon as impolitic, if nothing more. The thing to do, he thought, was to place Billy Budd in confinement and in a way dictated by usage, and postpone further action in so extraordinary a case, to such time as they should

8. Having lied, "not \* \* \* unto men, but unto God," Ananias was stricken dead (Acts v: 1-5).

rejoin the squadron, and then refer it to the Admiral. He recalled the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his excited exclamations so at variance with his normal manner. Was he unhinged? But assuming that he is, it is not so susceptible of proof. What then can he do? No more trying situation is conceivable than that of an officer subordinate under a Captain whom he suspects to be, not mad indeed, but yet not quite unaffected in his intellect. To argue his order to him would be insolence. To resist him would be mutiny.

In obedience to Captain Vere he communicated what had happened to the lieutenants & captain of marines; saying nothing as to the Captain's state. They fully shared his own surprise and concern. Like him too they seemed to think that such a matter should be referred to the Admiral.

## 22

Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colors, but where exactly does the one first blindingly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity. In pronounced cases there is no question about them. But in some supposed cases, in various degrees supposedly less pronounced, to draw the exact line of demarcation few will undertake tho for a fee some professional experts will. There is nothing namable but that some men will undertake to do it for pay.

Whether Captain Vere, as the Surgeon professionally and privately surmised, was really the sudden victim of any degree of aberration, one must determine for himself by such light as this narrative may afford.

[That] the unhappy event which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture was but too true. For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections, an aftertime very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea-commander two qualities not readily interfusable—prudence and rigor. Moreover there was something crucial in the case.

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the *Indomitable* and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. In a legal view the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless; and the indisputable deed of the latter, navally regarded, constituted the most heinous of military crimes. Yet more. The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea-commander inasmuch as he was not authorized to determine the matter on that primitive basis.

Small wonder then that the *Indomitable's* Captain though in

general a man of rapid decision, felt that circumspectness not less than promptitude was necessary. Until he could decide upon his course, and in each detail; and not only so, but until the concluding measure was upon the point of being enacted, he deemed it advisable, in view of all the circumstances to guard as much as possible against publicity. Here he may or may not have erred. Certain it is however that subsequently in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun-rooms and cabins he was not a little criticized by some officers, a fact imputed by his friends and vehemently by his cousin Jack Denton to professional jealousy of *Starry Vere*. Some imaginative ground for invidious comment there was. The maintenance of secrecy in the matter, the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred, the quarter-deck cabin; in these particulars lurked some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian.<sup>9</sup>

The case indeed was such that fain would the *Indomitable's* captain have deferred taking any action whatever respecting it further than to keep the foretopman a close prisoner till the ship rejoined the squadron and then submitting the matter to the judgement of his Admiral.

But a true military officer is in one particular like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial duty.

Feeling that unless quick action was taken on it, the deed of the foretopman, so soon as it should be known on the gun-decks would tend to awaken any slumbering embers of the Nore among the crew, a sense of the urgency of the case overruled in Captain Vere every other consideration. But tho' a conscientious disciplinarian he was no lover of authority for mere authority's sake. Very far was he from embracing opportunities for monopolizing to himself the perils of moral responsibility[,] none at least that could properly be referred to an official superior or shared with him by his official equals or even subordinates. So thinking[,] he was glad it would not be at variance with usage to turn the matter over to a summary court of his own officers, reserving to himself as the one on whom the ultimate accountability would rest, the right of maintaining a supervision of it, or formally or informally interposing at need. Accordingly a drum-head court was summarily convened, he electing the individuals composing it, the First Lieutenant, the Captain of marines, and the Sailing Master.

In associating an officer of marines with the sea-lieutenants in a case having to do with a sailor the Commander perhaps deviated

9. Peter I, Czar of Russia (1682-1725), Russian capital of St. Petersburg called Peter the Great, founded the new (1703).

from general custom. He was prompted thereto by the circumstance that he took that soldier to be a judicious person, thoughtful, and not altogether incapable of grappling with a difficult case unprecedented in his prior experience. Yet even as to him he was not without some latent misgiving, for withal he was an extremely good-natured man, an enjoyer of his dinner, a sound sleeper, and inclined to obesity. [A] man who tho' he would always maintain his manhood in battle might not prove altogether reliable in a moral dilemma involving aught of the tragic. As to the First Lieutenant and the Sailing Master Captain Vere could not but be aware that though honest natures, of approved gallantry upon occasion[,] their intelligence was mostly confined to the matter of active seamanship and the fighting demands of their profession. The court was held in the same cabin where the unfortunate affair had taken place. This cabin, the Commander's, embraced the entire area under the poop-deck. Aft, and on either side[,] was a small state-room[;] the one room temporarily a jail & the other a dead-house[,] and a yet smaller compartment leaving a space between, expanding forward into a goodly oblong of length coinciding with the ship's beam. A skylight of moderate dimension was overhead and at each end of the oblong space were two sashed port-hole windows easily convertible back into embrasures for short carronades.

All being quickly in readiness, Billy Budd was arraigned, Captain Vere necessarily appearing as the sole witness in the case, and as such temporarily sinking his rank, though singularly maintaining it in a matter apparently trivial, namely, that he testified from the ship's weather-side[,] with that object having caused the court to sit on the lee-side. Concisely he narrated all that had led up to the catastrophe, omitting nothing in Claggart's accusation and deposing as to the manner in which the prisoner had received it. At this testimony the three officers glanced with no little surprise at Billy Budd, the last man they would have suspected either of the mutinous design alleged by Claggart or the undeniable deed he himself had done.

The First Lieutenant[,] taking judicial primacy and turning toward the prisoner, said, "Captain Vere has spoken. Is it or is it not as Captain Vere says?" In response came syllables not so much impeded in the utterance as might have been anticipated. They were these: "Captain Vere tells the truth. It is just as Captain Vere says, but it is not as the Master-at-Arms said. I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King."

"I believe you, my man" said the witness[,] his voice indicating a suppressed emotion not otherwise betrayed.

"God will bless you for that, Your Honor!" not without stammering said Billy, and all but broke down. But immediately was recalled to self-control by another question, to which with the same

emotional difficulty of utterance he said "No, there was no malice between us. I never bore malice against the Master-at-arms. I am sorry that he is dead. I did not mean to kill him. Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him. But he foully lied to my face and in presence of my Captain, and I had to say something, and I could only say it with a blow, God help me!"

In the impulsive above-board manner of the frank one[,] the court saw confirmed all that was implied in words that just previously had perplexed them[,] coming as they did from the testifier to the tragedy and promptly following Billy's impassioned disclaimer of mutinous intent—Captain Vere's words, "I believe you, my man."

Next it was asked of him whether he knew of or suspected aught savoring of incipient trouble (meaning mutiny, tho' the explicit term was avoided) going on in any section of the ship's company.

The reply lingered. This was naturally imputed by the court to the same vocal embarrassment which had retarded or obstructed previous answers. But in main it was otherwise here; the question immediately recalling to Billy's mind the interview with the after-guardsmen in the fore-chains. But an innate repugnance to playing a part at all approaching that of an informer against one's own ship-mates—the same erring sense of uninstructed honor which had stood in the way of his reporting the matter at the time though as a loyal man-of-war-man it was incumbent on him[,] and failure so to do if charged against him and proven, would have subjected him to the heaviest of penalties; this, with the blind feeling now his, that nothing really was being hatched, prevailed with him. When the answer came it was a negative.

"One question more," said the officer of marines now first speaking and with a troubled earnestness, "You tell us that what the Master-at-arms said against you was a lie. Now why should he have so lied, so maliciously lied, since you declare there was no malice between you?"

At that question unintentionally touching on a spiritual sphere wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts, he was nonplussed, evincing a confusion indeed that some observers, such as can readily be imagined, would have construed into involuntary evidence of hidden guilt. Nevertheless he strove some way to answer, but all at once relinquished the vain endeavor, at the same time turning an appealing glance towards Captain Vere as deeming him his best helper and friend. Captain Vere who had been seated for a time rose to his feet, addressing the interrogator. "The question you put to him comes naturally enough. But how can he rightly answer it? or anybody else? unless indeed it be he who lies within there" designating the compartment where lay the corpse. "But the prone one there will not rise to our summons. In effect, tho', as it seems to me, the point you

make is hardly material. Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the Master-at-arms, and irrespective of the provocation to the blow, a martial court must needs in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequence justly is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed."

This utterance the full significance of which it was not at all likely that Billy took in, nevertheless caused him to turn a wistful interrogative look toward the speaker, a look in its dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence. Nor was the same utterance without marked effect upon the three officers, more especially the soldier. Couched in it seemed to them a meaning unanticipated, involving a prejudgment on the speaker's part. It served to augment a mental disturbance previously evident enough.

The soldier once more spoke; in a tone of suggestive dubiety addressing at once his associates and Captain Vere: "Nobody is present—none of the ship's company, I mean, who might shed lateral light, if any is to be had, upon what remains mysterious in this matter."

"That is thoughtfully put" said Captain Vere; "I see your drift. Ay, there is a mystery; but, to use a Scriptural phrase, it is 'a mystery of iniquity,' a matter for psychologic theologians to discuss. But what has a military court to do with it? Not to add that for us any possible investigation of it is cut off by the lasting tongue-tie of—him—in yonder," again designating the mortuary state-room [""]The prisoner's deed,—with that alone we have to do."

To this, and particularly the closing reiteration, the marine soldier knowing not how aptly to reply, sadly abstained from saying aught. The First Lieutenant who at the outset had not unnaturally assumed primacy in the court, now overrulingly instructed by a glance from Captain Vere, a glance more effective than words, resumed that primacy. Turning to the prisoner, "Budd," he said, and scarce in equable tones, "Budd, if you have aught further to say for yourself, say it now."

Upon this the young sailor turned another quick glance toward Captain Vere; then, as taking a hint from that aspect, a hint confirming his own instinct that silence was now best, replied to the Lieutenant "I have said all, Sir."

The marine—the same who had been the sentinel without the cabin-door at the time that the foretopman followed by the master-at-arms, entered it—he, standing by the sailor throughout these judicial proceedings, was now directed to take him back to the after compartment originally assigned to the prisoner and his custodian. As the twain disappeared from view, the three officers as partially liberated from some inward constraint associated with Billy's mere



presence, simultancously stirred in their seats. They exchanged looks of troubled indecision, yet feeling that decide they must and without long delay. As for Captain Vere, he for the time stood unconsciously with his back toward them, apparently in one of his absent fits, gazing out from a sashed port-hole to windward upon the monotonous blank of the twilight sea. But the court's silence continuing, broken only at moments by brief consultations in low earnest tones, this seemed to arm him and energize him. Turning, he to-and-fro paced the cabin athwart; in the returning ascent to windward, climbing the slant deck in the ship's lee roll; without knowing it symbolizing thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against primitive instincts strong as the wind and the sea. Presently he came to a stand before the three. After scanning their faces he stood less as mustering his thoughts for expression, than as one inly deliberating how best to put them to well-meaning men not intellectually mature, men with whom it was necessary to demonstrate certain principles that were axioms to himself. Similar impatience as to talking is perhaps one reason that deters some minds from addressing any popular assemblies.

When speak he did, something both in the substance of what he said and his manner of saying it, showed the influence of unshared studies modifying and tempering the practical training of an active career. This, along with his phrascology now and then was suggestive of the grounds whereon rested that imputation of a certain pedantry socially alleged against him by certain naval men of wholly practical cast, captains who nevertheless would frankly concede that His Majesty's navy mustered no more efficient officer of their grade than *Starry Vere*.

What he said was to this effect: "Hitherto I have been but the witness, little more; and I should hardly think now to take another tone, that of your coadjutor, for the time, did I not perceive in you, —at the crisis too—a troubled hesitancy, proceeding, I doubt not from the clash of military duty with moral scruple—scruple vitalized by compassion. For the compassion how can I otherwise than share it. But, mindful of paramount obligations I strive against scruples that may tend to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen, that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here acting not as casuists or moralists, it is a case practical, and under martial law practically to be dealt with.

"But your scruples: do they move as in a dusk? Challenge them. Make them advance and declare themselves. Come now: do they import something like this: If, mindless of palliating circumstances, we are bound to regard the death of the Master-at-arms as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof

the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow-creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King. Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, tho' this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free-agents. When war is declared are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgements approve the war, that is but coincidence. So in other particulars. So now. For suppose condemnation to follow these present proceedings. Would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigour of it, we are not responsible. Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it.

[“]But the exceptional in the matter moves the hearts within you. Even so too is mine moved. But let not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool. Ashore in a criminal case will an upright judge allow himself off the bench to be waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch him with her tearful plea? Well the heart here denotes the feminine in man<sup>1</sup> is as that piteous woman, and hard tho' it be[,] she must here be ruled out.”

He paused, earnestly studying them for a moment; then resumed.

“But something in your aspect seems to urge that it is not solely the heart that moves in you, but also the conscience, the private conscience. But tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?”

Here the three men moved in their seats, less convinced than agitated by the course of an argument troubling but the more the spontaneous conflict within.

Perceiving which, the speaker paused for a moment; then abruptly changing his tone, went on.

“To steady us a bit, let us recur to the facts.—In war-time at sea a man-of-war's-man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills. Apart from its effect the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. Furthermore—”

“Ay, Sir,” emotionally broke in the officer of marines, “in one sense it was. But surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homi-

1. Comma in the manuscript here deleted.

cide."

"Surely not, my good man. And before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one, that plea would largely extenuate. At the Last Assizes<sup>2</sup> it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His Majesty's] service—in this ship indeed—there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know. 'Tho' as their fellow-creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as navy officers, what reck we of it? Still less recks the enemy. Our impressed men he would fain cut down in the same swath with our volunteers. As regards the enemy's naval conscripts, some of whom may even share our own abhorrence of the regicidal French Directory,<sup>3</sup> it is the same on our side. War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose.

["]But while, put to it by those anxieties in you which I can not but respect, I only repeat myself—while thus strangely we prolong proceedings that should be summary—the enemy may be sighted and an engagement result. We must do; and one of two things must we do—condemn or let go."

"Can we not convict and yet mitigate the penalty?" asked the junior Lieutenant here speaking, and falteringly, for the first.

"Lieutenant, were that clearly lawful for us under the circumstances consider the consequences of such clemency. The people" (meaning the ship's company) "have native-sense; most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition; and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which our official position forbids—they, long moulded by arbitrary discipline have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate. No, to the people the foretopman's deed however it be worded in the announcement will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. *Why?* they will ruminat. You know what sailors are. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the Nore? Ay. They know the well-founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practising a lawful rigor singularly demanded at this juncture lest it should provoke new troubles. What

2. Assizes are the highest judicial courts of review of the British counties; here the term refers to the scriptural Judgment Day.

3. The executive council of the French First Republic (1795–1799). This was the enemy against whom the British fleet was engaged in 1797, the year of this story (*cf.* the Preface).

shame to us such a conjecture on their part, and how deadly to discipline. You see then, whither prompted by duty and the law I steadfastly drive. But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid."

With that, crossing the deck he resumed his place by the sashed port-hole, tacitly leaving the three to come to a decision. On the cabin's opposite side the troubled court sat silent. Loyal lieges, plain and practical, though at bottom they dissented from some points Captain Vere had put to them, they were without the faculty, hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man, one too not less their superior in mind than in naval rank. But it is not improbable that even such of his words as were not without influence over them, less came home to them than his closing appeal to their instinct as sea-officers in the forethought he threw out as to the practical consequences to discipline, considering the unconfirmed tone of the fleet at the time, should a man-of-war's-man['s] violent killing at sea of a superior in grade be allowed to pass for aught else than a capital crime demanding prompt infliction of the penalty.

Not unlikely they were brought to something more or less akin to that harassed frame of mind which in the year 1842 actuated the commander of the U.S. brig-of-war *Somers* to resolve, under the so-called Articles of War, Articles modelled upon the English Mutiny Act, to resolve upon the execution at sea of a midshipman and two petty-officers as mutineers designing the seizure of the brig. Which resolution was carried out though in a time of peace and within not many days sail of home. An act vindicated by a naval court of inquiry subsequently convened ashore. History, and here cited without comment. True, the circumstances on board the *Somers* were different from those on board the *Indomitable*. But the urgency felt, well-warranted or otherwise, was much the same.

Says a writer whom few know, "Forty years after a battle it is easy for a non-combatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought. It is another thing personally and under fire to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it. Much so with respect to other emergencies involving considerations both practical and moral, and when it is imperative promptly to act. The greater the fog the more it imperils the steamer, and speed is put on tho' at the hazard of running somebody down. Little ween the snug card-players in the cabin of the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge."

In brief, Billy Budd was formally convicted and sentenced to be

hung at the yard-arm in the early morning-watch, it being now night. Otherwise, as is customary in such cases, the sentence would forthwith have been carried out. In war-time on the field or in the fleet, a mortal punishment decreed by a drum-head court—on the field sometimes decreed by but a nod from the General—follows without delay on the heel of conviction without appeal.

23

It was Captain Vere himself who of his own motion communicated the finding of the court to the prisoner; for that purpose going to the compartment where he was in custody and bidding the marine there to withdraw for the time.

Beyond the communication of the sentence what took place at this interview was never known. But in view of the character of the twain briefly closeted in that state-room, each radically sharing in the rarer qualities of our nature—so rare indeed as to be all but incredible to average minds however much cultivated—some conjectures may be ventured.

It would have been in consonance with the spirit of Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one—should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself had played in bringing about the decision, at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy indeed he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his Captain making such a confidant of him. Nor, as to the sentence itself could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die. Even more may have been. Captain Vere in [the] end may have developed the passion sometimes latent under a[n] exterior stoical or indifferent. He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity may in [the] end have caught Billy to his heart even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest.<sup>4</sup> But there is no telling the sacrament, seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world wherever under circumstances at all akin to those here attempted to be set forth two of great Nature's nobler order embrace. There is privacy at the time, inviolable to the survivor, and holy oblivion the sequel to each diviner magnanimity, providentially covers all at last.

The first to encounter Captain Vere in act of leaving the compartment was the senior Lieutenant. The face he beheld, for the moment one expressive of the agony of the strong, was to that officer, tho' a man of fifty, a startling revelation. That the condemned one

4. Cf. Genesis xxii: 1-14.

suffered less than he who mainly had effected the condemnation was apparently indicated by the former's exclamation in the scene soon perforce to be touched upon.

24

Of a series of incidents within a brief term rapidly following each other, the adequate narration may take up a term less brief, especially if explanation or comment here and there seem requisite to the better understanding of such incidents. Between the entrance into the cabin of him who never left it alive, and him who when he did leave it left it as one condemned to die; between this and the closeted interview just given less than an hour and a half had elapsed. It was an interval long enough however to awaken speculations among no few of the ship's company as to what it was that could be detaining in the cabin the master-at-arms and the sailor; for a rumor that both of them had been seen to enter it and neither of them had been seen to emerge, this rumor had got abroad upon the gun-decks and in the tops; the people of a great warship being in one respect like villagers taking microscopic note of every outward movement or non-movement going on. When therefore in weather not at all tempestuous all hands were called in the second dog-watch, a summons under such circumstances not usual in those hours, the crew were not wholly unprepared for some announcement extraordinary, one having connection too with the continued absence of the two men from their wonted haunts.

There was a moderate sea at the time; and the moon, newly risen and near to being at its full, silvered the white spar-deck wherever not blotted by the clear-cut shadows horizontally thrown of fixtures and moving men. On either side the quarter-deck the marine guard under arms was drawn up; and Captain Vere standing in his place surrounded by all the ward-room officers, addressed his men. In so doing his manner showed neither more nor less than that property pertaining to his supreme position aboard his own ship. In clear terms and concise he told them what had taken place in the cabin; that the master-at-arms was dead; that he who had killed him had been already tried by a summary court and condemned to death; and that the execution would take place in the early morning watch. The word *mutiny* was not named in what he said. He refrained too from making the occasion an opportunity for any preachment as to the maintenance of discipline, thinking perhaps that under existing circumstances in the navy the consequence of violating discipline should be made to speak for itself.

Their captain's announcement was listened to by the throng of standing sailors in a dumbness like that of a seated congregation of believers in hell listening to the clergyman's announcement of his Calvinistic text.

At the close, however, a confused murmur went up. It began to wax. All but instantly, then, at a sign, it was pierced and suppressed by shrill whistles of the Boatswain and his Mates piping down one watch.

To be prepared for burial Claggart's body was delivered to certain petty-officers of his mess. And here, not to clog the sequel with lateral matters, it may be added that at a suitable hour, the Master-at-arms was committed to the sea with every funeral honor properly belonging to his naval grade.

In this proceeding as in every public one growing out of the tragedy strict adherence to usage was observed. Nor in any point could it have been at all deviated from, either with respect to Claggart or Billy Budd[,] without begetting undesirable speculations in the ship's company, sailors, and more particularly men-of-war's men, being of all men the greatest sticklers for usage.

For similar cause, all communication between Captain Vere and the condemned one ended with the closeted interview already given, the latter being now surrendered to the ordinary routine preliminary to the end. This transfer under guard from the Captain's quarters was effected without unusual precautions—at least no visible ones.

If possible not to let the men so much as surmise that their officers anticipate aught amiss from them is the tacit rule in a military ship. And the more that some sort of trouble should really be apprehended the more do the officers keep that apprehension to themselves; tho' not the less unostentatious vigilance may be augmented.

In the present instance the sentry placed over the prisoner had strict orders to let no one have communication with him but the Chaplain. And certain unobtrusive measures were taken absolutely to insure this point.

25

In a seventy-four of the old order the deck known as the upper gun-deck was the one covered over by the spar-deck which last though not without its armament was for the most part exposed to the weather. In general it was at all hours free from hammocks; those of the crew swinging on the lower gun-deck, and berth-deck, the latter being not only a dormitory but also the place for the stowing of the sailors' bags, and on both sides lined with the large chests or movable pantries of the many messes of the men.

On the starboard side of the *Indomitable's* upper gun-deck, behold Billy Budd under sentry lying prone in irons in one of the bays formed by the regular spacing of the guns comprising the batteries on either side. All these pieces were of the heavier calibre of that period. Mounted on lumbering wooden carriages they were hampered with cumbersome harness of breeching and strong side-tackles for running them out. Guns and carriages, together with the long rammers and

shorter lintstocks lodged in loops overhead—all these, as customary, were painted black; and the heavy hempen breechings tarred to the same tint, wore the like livery of the undertakers. In contrast with the funeral huc of these surroundings the prone sailor's exterior apparel, white *jumper* and white duck trousers, each more or less soiled, dimly glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discolored snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth. In effect he is already in his shroud or the garments that shall serve him in lieu of one. Over him but scarce illuminating him, two battle-lanterns swing from two massive beams of the deck above. Fed with the oil supplied by the war-contractors (whose gains, honest or otherwise, are in every land an anticipated portion of the harvest of death) with flickering splashes of dirty yellow light they pollute the pale moonshine[,] all but ineffectually struggling in obstructed flecks thro the open ports from which the *tompioned*<sup>5</sup> cannon protrude. Other lanterns at intervals serve but to bring out somewhat the obscurer bays which like small confessionals or side-chapels in a cathedral branch from the long dim-vistaed broad aisle between the two batteries of that covered tier.

Such was the deck where now lay the Handsome Sailor. Through the rose-tan of his complexion, no pallor could have shown. It would have taken days of sequestration from the winds and the sun to have brought about the effacement of that. But the skeleton in the cheekbone at the point of its angle was just beginning delicately to be defined under the warm-tinted skin. In fervid hearts self-contained some brief experiences devour our human tissue as secret fire in a ship's hold consumes cotton in the bale.

But now lying between the two guns, as nipped in the vice of fate, Billy's agony, mainly proceeding from a generous young heart's virgin experience of the diabolical incarnate and effective in some men—the tension of that agony was over now. It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere. Without movement, he lay as in a trance. That adolescent expression previously noted as his, taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle when the warm hearth-glow of the still chamber at night plays on the dimples that at whiles mysteriously form in the cheek, silently coming and going there. For now and then in the gyved one's trance a serene happy light born of some wandering reminiscence or dream would diffuse itself over his face, and then wane away only anew to return.

The Chaplain coming to see him and finding him thus, and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence, attentively regarded him for a space, then slipping aside, withdrew for the time, peradventure feeling that even he the minister of Christ tho' receiving his

5. Usually, "tampioned"; plugged with a tampion, as the muzzle of a gun not in use.



stipend from Mars had no consolation to proffer which could result in a peace transcending that which he beheld. But in the small hours he came again. And the prisoner now awake to his surroundings noticed his approach and civilly, all but cheerfully, welcomed him. But it was to little purpose that in the interview following the good man sought to bring Billy Budd to some godly understanding that he must die, and at dawn. True, Billy himself freely referred to his death as a thing close at hand; but it was something in the way that children will refer to death in general, who yet among their other sports will play a funeral with hearse and mourners.

Not that like children Billy was incapable of conceiving what death really is. No, but he was wholly without irrational fear of it, a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than those so-called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterate Nature. And, as elsewhere said, a barbarian Billy radically was; as much so, for all the costume, as his countrymen the British captives, living trophies, made to march in the Roman triumph of Germanicus.<sup>6</sup> Quite as much so as those later barbarians, young men probably, and picked specimens among the earlier British converts to Christianity, at least nominally such and taken to Rome (as today converts from lesser isles of the sea may be taken to London) of whom the Pope of that time, admiring the strangeness of their personal beauty so unlike the Italian stamp, their clear ruddy complexion and curled flaxen locks, exclaimed, "Angles" (meaning *English* the modern derivative) "Angles do you call them? And is it because they look so like angels?" Had it been later in time one would think that the Pope had in mind Fra Angelico's<sup>7</sup> seraphs some of whom, plucking apples in gardens of the Hesperides have the faint rose-bud complexion of the more beautiful English girls.

If in vain the good Chaplain sought to impress the young barbarian with ideas of death akin to those conveyed in the skull, dial, and cross-bones on old tombstones; equally futile to all appearance were his efforts to bring home to him the thought of salvation and a Saviour. Billy listened, but less out of awe or reverence perhaps than from a certain natural politeness; doubtless at bottom regarding all that in much the same way that most mariners of his class take any discourse abstract or out of the common tone of the work-a-day world. And this sailor-way of taking clerical discourse is not wholly unlike the way in which the pioneer of Christianity full of transcendent miracles was received long ago on tropic isles by any superior *savage* so called—a Tahitian say of Captain Cook's time or shortly after that time.<sup>8</sup> Out

6. Germanicus Caesar (15 B.C.—19 A.D.), Roman general and conqueror, whose triumphs were spectacularly celebrated in Rome in 17 A.D.

7. Italian friar-painter of the fifteenth century, famous for his religious frescoes. The Hesperides, in classical myth,

were fabulous gardens where grew golden apples, guarded by a dragon.

8. Captain James Cook (1728–1779), British explorer, made remarkable discoveries in the Pacific, visiting the Marquesas Islands and Tahiti, where Melville adventured in 1842.

of natural courtesy he received, but did not appropriate. It was like a gift placed in the palm of an outreached hand upon which the fingers do not close.

But the *Indomitable's* Chaplain was a discreet man possessing the good sense of a good heart. So he insisted not in his vocation here. At the instance of Captain Vere, a lieutenant had apprised him of pretty much everything as to Billy; and since he felt that innocence was even a better thing than religion wherewith to go to Judgement, he reluctantly withdrew; but in his emotion not without first performing an act strange enough in an Englishman, and under the circumstances yet more so in any regular priest. Stooping over, he kissed on the fair cheek his fellow-man, a felon in martial law, one who though on the confines of death he felt he could never convert to a dogma; nor for all that did he fear for his future.

Marvel not that having been made acquainted with the young sailor's essential innocence (an irruption of heretic thought hard to suppress) the worthy man lifted not a finger to avert the doom of such a martyr to martial discipline. So to do would not only have been as idle as invoking the desert, but would also have been an audacious transgression of the bounds of his function, one as exactly prescribed to him by military law as that of the boatswain or any other naval officer. Bluntly put, a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War—Mars. As such, he is as incongruous as that musket of Blücher etc.<sup>9</sup> at Christmas. Why then is he there? Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon; because too he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but brute Force.

26

The night so luminous on the spar-deck but otherwise on the cavernous ones below, levels so like the tiered galleries in a coal-mine—the luminous night passed away. But, like the prophet in the chariot disappearing in heaven and dropping his mantle to Elisha, the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the breaking day. A meek shy light appeared in the East, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapor. That light slowly waxed. Suddenly *eight bells* was struck aft, responded to by one louder metallic stroke from forward. It was four o'clock in the morning. Instantly the silver whistles were heard summoning all hands to witness punishment. Up through the great hatchways rimmed with racks of heavy shot, the watch below came pouring overspreading with the watch already on deck the space between the mainmast and foremast including that occupied by the capacious *launch* and the black booms tiered on either side of it, boat and booms making a summit of observation for the

9. The manuscript is illegible; "Blücher etc." is a conjectural reading. Prussian Field Marshal Gebhard von Blücher

(1742–1819), who had aided Wellington at Waterloo, was still famous.

powder-boys and younger tars. A different group comprising one watch of topmen leaned over the rail of that sea-balcony, no small one in a seventy-four, looking down on the crowd below. Man or boy none spake but in whisper, and few spake at all. Captain Vere—as before, the central figure among the assembled commissioned officers—stood nigh the break of the poop-deck facing forward. Just below him on the quarter-deck the marines in full equipment were drawn up much as at the scene of the promulgated sentence.

At sea in the old time, the execution by halter of a military sailor was generally from the fore-yard. In the present instance, for special reasons the main-yard was assigned. Under an arm of that lee yard<sup>1</sup> the prisoner was presently brought up, the Chaplain attending him. It was noted at the time and remarked upon afterwards, that in this final scene the good man evinced little or nothing of the perfunctory. Brief speech indeed he had with the condemned one, but the genuine Gospel was less on his tongue than in his aspect and manner towards him. The final preparations personal to the latter being speedily brought to an end by two boatswain's-mates, the consummation impended. Billy stood facing aft. At the penultimate moment, his words, his only ones, words wholly unobstructed in the utterance were these—"God bless Captain Vere!" Syllables so unanticipated coming from one with the ignominious hemp about his neck—a conventional felon's benediction directed aft towards the quarters of honor; syllables too delivered in the clear melody of a singing-bird on the point of launching from the twig, had a phenomenal effect, not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor spiritualized now thro' late experiences so poignantly profound.

Without volition as it were, as if indeed the ship's populace were but the vehicles of some vocal current electric, with one voice from aloft and aloft came a resonant sympathetic echo—"God bless Captain Vere!" And yet at that instant Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as he was in their eyes.

At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them, Captain Vere, either thro stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock, stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship-armorer's rack.

The hull deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward was just regaining an even keel, when the last signal[,] a preconcerted dumb one[,] was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapory fleece hanging low in the East, was shot thro with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision[,] and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and, ascending, took the full rose of

1. Melville wrote both "weather" and "lee" above the word "yard," and failed to cancel either of these opposites. The

lee yard would be more likely, as being more sheltered.

the dawn.

In the pinioned figure, arrived at the yard-end, to the wonder of all no motion was apparent[,] none save that created by the ship's motion, in moderate weather so majestic in a great ship ponderously canoned.

### End of Chapter

#### <sup>27</sup> A digression

When some days afterward in reference to the singularity just mentioned, the Purser a rather ruddy rotund person more accurate as an accountant than profound as a philosopher, said at mess to the Surgeon, "What testimony to the force lodged in will-power" the latter—saturnine spare and tall, one in whom a discreet causticity went along with a manner less genial than polite, replied, "Your pardon, Mr. Purser. In a hanging scientifically conducted—and under special orders I myself directed how Budd's was to be effected—any movement following the completed suspension and originating in the body suspended, such movement indicates mechanical spasm in the muscular system. Hence the absence of that is no more attributable to will-power as you call it than to horse-power—begging your pardon."

"But this muscular spasm you speak of, is not that in a degree more or less invariable in these cases?[""]

"Assuredly so, Mr. Purser."

"How then, my good sir, do you account for its absence in this instance?"

"Mr. Purser, it is clear that your sense of the singularity in this matter equals not mine. You account for it by what you call will-power a term not yet included in the lexicon of science. For me I do not, with my present knowledge pretend to account for it at all. Even should we assume the hypothesis that at the first touch of the halyards the action of Budd's heart, intensified by extraordinary emotion at its climax, abruptly stopt—much like a watch when in carelessly winding it up you strain at the finish, thus snapping the chain—even under that hypothesis how account for the phenomenon that followed."

"You admit then that the absence of spasmodic movement was phenomenal."

["]It was phenomenal, Mr. Purser, in the sense that it was an appearance the cause of which is not immediately to be assigned."

["]But tell me, my dear Sir,[""] pertinaciously continued the other, "was the man's death effected by the halter, or was it a species of euthanasia?[""]

"*Euthanasia*, Mr. Purser, is something like your *will-power*: I doubt its authenticity as a scientific term—begging your pardon again. It

is at once imaginative and metaphysical,—in short, Greek. But” abruptly changing his tone “there is a case in the sick-bay that I do not care to leave to my assistants. Beg your pardon, but excuse me.” And rising from the mess he formally withdrew.

28

The silence at the moment of execution and for a moment or two continuing thereafter, a silence but emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull or the flutter of a sail caused by the helmsman’s eyes being tempted astray, this emphasized silence was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to be verbally rendered. Whoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains, showers not shared by the plain; whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods, may form some conception of the sound now heard. The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness since it came from close-by, even from the men massed on the ship’s open deck. Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further than it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to, in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men’s part of their involuntary echoing of Billy’s benediction. But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamor it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness.

“Pipe down the starboard watch Boatswain, and see that they go.”

Shrill as the shriek of the sea-hawk the whistles of the Boatswain and his Mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it; and yielding to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one half. For the remainder most of them were set to temporary employments connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be got up to serve occasion by any officer-of-the-deck.

Now each proceeding that follows a mortal sentence pronounced at sea by a drum-head court is characterised by promptitude not perceptibly merging into hurry, tho bordering that. The hammock, the one which had been Billy’s bed when alive, having already been ballasted with shot and otherwise prepared to serve for his canvas coffin, the last offices of the sea-undertakers, the Sail-Maker’s Mates, were now speedily completed. When everything was in readiness a second call for all hands made necessary by the strategic movement before mentioned was sounded and now to witness burial.

The details of this closing formality it needs not to give. But when the tilted plank let slide its freight into the sea, a second strange human murmur was heard, blended now with another inarticulate sound proceeding from certain larger sea-fowl whose attention having been attracted by the peculiar commotion in the water resulting from the

heavy sloped dive of the shotted hammock into the sea, flew screaming to the spot. So near the hull did they come, that the stridor or bony creak of their gaunt double-jointed pinions was audible. As the ship under light airs passed on, leaving the burial-spot astern, they still kept circling it low down with the moving shadow of their outstretched wings and the croaked requiem of their cries.

Upon sailors as superstitious as those of the age preceding ours, men-of-war's men too who had just beheld the prodigy of repose in the form suspended in air and now foundering in the deeps; to such mariners the action of the sea-fowl tho' dictated by mere animal greed for prey, was big with no prosaic significance. An uncertain movement began among them, in which some encroachment was made. It was tolerated but for a moment. For suddenly the drum beat to quarters, which familiar sound happening at least twice every day, had upon the present occasion a signal peremptoriness in it. True martial discipline long continued superinduces in average man a sort of impulse [of] docility whose operation at the official sound of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct.

The drum-beat dissolved the multitude, distributing most of them along the batteries of the two covered gun-decks. There, as wont, the guns' crews stood by their respective cannon erect and silent. In due course the First Officer, sword under arm and standing in his place on the quarter-deck[,] formally received the successive reports of the sworded Lieutenants commanding the sections of batteries below; the last of which reports being made[,] the summed report he delivered with the customary salute to the Commander. All this occupied time, which in the present case, was the object of beating to quarters at an hour prior to the customary one. That such variance from usage was authorized by an officer like Captain Vere, a martinet as some deemed him, was evidence of the necessity for unusual action implied in what he deemed to be temporarily the mood of his men. "With mankind" he would say "forms, measured forms are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spell-binding the wild denizens of the wood." And this he once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequences thereof.

At this unwonted muster at quarters, all proceeded as at the regular hour. The band on the quarter-deck played a sacred air. After which the Chaplain went thro' the customary morning service. That done, the drum beat the retreat, and toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline & purpose of war, the men in their wonted orderly manner, dispersed to the places allotted them when not at the guns.

And now it was full day. The fleece of low-hanging vapor had vanished, licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the

circumambient air in the clearness of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer's yard.

29

The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction can not so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial.

How it fared with the Handsome Sailor during the year of the Great Mutiny has been faithfully given. But tho' properly the story ends with his life, something in way of sequel will not be amiss. Three brief chapters will suffice.

In the general re-christening under the Directory of the craft originally forming the navy of the French monarchy, the *St. Louis* line-of-battle ship was named the *Athéiste*. Such a name, like some other substituted ones in the Revolutionary fleet while proclaiming the infidel audacity of the ruling power was yet, tho' not so intended to be, the aptest name, if one consider it, ever given to a war-ship; far more so indeed than the *Devastation*, the *Erebus* (the *Hell*) and similar names bestowed upon fighting-ships.

On the return-passage to the English fleet from the detached cruise during which occurred the events already recorded, the *Indomitable* fell in with the *Athéiste*. An engagement ensued; during which Captain Vere in the act of putting his ship alongside the enemy with a view of throwing his boarders across her bulwarks, was hit by a musket-ball from a port-hole of the enemy's main cabin. More than disabled he dropped to the deck and was carried below to the same cock-pit where some of his men already lay. The senior Lieutenant took command. Under him the enemy was finally captured and though much crippled was by rare good fortune successfully taken into Gibraltar, an English port not very distant from the scene of the fight. There, Captain Vere with the rest of the wounded was put ashore. He lingered for some days, but the end came. Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar.<sup>2</sup> The spirit that spite its philosophic austerity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained to the fulness of fame.

Not long before death while lying under the influence of that magical drug which soothing the physical frame mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to murmur words inexplicable to his attendant—"Billy Budd, Billy Budd." That these were not the accents of remorse, would seem clear from what the attendant said to the *Indomitable's* senior officer of marines who[,] as the most

2. Admiral Nelson destroyed Napoleon's fleet at the Battle of the Nile (1798); at Trafalgar in 1805 he ended the French

naval wars with victory, and was himself killed.

reluctant to condemn of the members of the drum-head court, too well knew[,] tho' here he kept the knowledge to himself, who Billy Budd was.

30

Some few weeks after the execution, among other matters under the head of *News from the Mediterranean*, there appeared in a naval chronicle of the time, an authorized weekly publication, an account of the affair. It was doubtless for the most part written in good faith, tho' the medium, partly rumor, through which the facts must have reached the writer, served to deflect and in part falsify them. The account was as follows:—

“On the tenth of the last month a deplorable occurrence took place on board H.M.S. *Indomitable*. John Claggart, the ship's master-at-arms, discovering that some sort of plot was incipient among an inferior section of the ship's company, and that the ring-leader was one William Budd; he, Claggart in the act of arraigning the man before the Captain was vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath-knife of Budd.

[“]The deed and the implement employed, sufficiently suggest that tho' mustered into the service under an English name the assassin was no Englishman, but one of those aliens adopting English cognomens whom the present extraordinary necessities of the Service have caused to be admitted into it in considerable numbers.

[“]The enormity of the crime and the extreme depravity of the criminal, appear the greater in view of the character of the victim, a middle-aged man respectable and discreet, belonging to that minor official grade, the petty-officers, upon whom, as none know better than the commissioned gentlemen, the efficiency of His Majesty's navy so largely depends. His function was a responsible one; at once onerous & thankless and his fidelity in it the greater because of his strong patriotic impulse. In this instance as in so many other instances in these days, the character of this unfortunate man signally refutes, if refutation were needed, that peevish saying attributed to the late Dr. Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

[“]The criminal paid the penalty of his crime. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard H.M.S. *Indomitable*.”

The above, appearing in a publication now long ago superannuated and forgotten[,] is all that hitherto has stood in human record to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd[.]

31

Everything is for a term remarkable in navies. Any tangible object associated with some striking incident of the service is converted into a monument. The spar from which the Foretopman was suspended,



was for some few years kept trace of by the bluejackets. Their knowledge followed it from ship to dock-yard and again from dock-yard to ship, still pursuing it even when at last reduced to a mere dock-yard boom. To them a chip of it was as a piece of the Cross. Ignorant tho' they were of the secret facts of the tragedy, and not thinking but that the penalty was somehow unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view, for all that they instinctively felt that Billy was a sort of man as incapable of mutiny as of wilful murder. They recalled the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor, that face never deformed by a sneer or subtler vile freak of the heart within. Their impression of him was doubtless deepened by the fact that he was gone, and in a measure mysteriously gone. At the time on the gun decks of the *Indomitable* the general estimate of his nature and its unconscious simplicity eventually found rude utterance from another foretop-man[,] one of his own watch[,] gifted, as some sailors are, with an artless poetic temperament; the tarry hands made some lines which after circulating among the shipboard crew for a while, finally got rudely printed at Portsmouth as a ballad. The title given to it was the sailor's.

*Billy in the Darbies*<sup>a</sup>

Good of the Chaplain to enter Lone Bay  
And down on his marrow-bones here and pray  
For the likes just o' me, Billy Budd.—But look:  
Through the port comes the moon-shine astray  
It tips the guard's cutlas and silvers this nook;  
But 'twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day.  
A jewel-block they'll make of me tomorrow,  
Pendant pearl from the yard-arm-end  
Like the ear-drop I gave to Bristol Molly—  
O, 'tis me, not the sentence they'll suspend.  
Ay, Ay, all is up; and I must up too  
Early in the morning, aloft from alow.  
On an empty stomach, now, never it would do.  
They'll give me a nibble—bit o' biscuit ere I go.  
Sure, a messmate will reach me the last parting cup;  
But, turning heads away from the hoist and the belay,  
Heaven knows who will have the running of me up!  
No pipe to those halyards.—But aren't it all sham?  
A blur's in my eyes; it is dreamin'g that I am.  
A hatchet to my hawser? all adrift to go?  
The drum roll to grog, and Billy never know?  
But Donald he has promised to stand by the plank;  
So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink.

But—no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think.—  
I remember Taff the Welshman when he sank.  
And his cheek it was like the budding pink[.]  
But me they'll lash me in hammock, drop me deep.  
Fathoms down, fathoms down, how I'll dream fast asleep.  
I feel it stealing now. Sentry, are you there?  
Just ease this darbies at the wrist, and roll me over fair,  
I am sleepy, and the oozy weeds about me twist.

END OF BOOK

April 19th 1891



# Transcendental Idealism

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON

(1803-1882)

The durability of Emerson for the general reader is one measure of his genius. Now, a century and a half after his birth, the forum and the market place echo his words and ideas. As Ralph L. Rusk has suggested, this is partly because "he is wise man, wit, and poet, all three," and partly because his speculations proved prophetic, having as firm a practical relationship with the conditions of our present age as with the history of mankind before him. "His insatiable passion for unity resembles Einstein's" as much as Plato's; and this passion unites serenity and practicality, God and science, in a manner highly suggestive for those attempting to solve the twentieth-century dilemmas which have seemed most desperately urgent.

Emerson was born to the clerical tradition; his father was pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Boston, and successor to a line of nonconformist and Puritan clergymen. William Emerson died in 1811, when the boy was eight, leaving his widow to face poverty and to educate their five sons. At Boston Latin School, at the Latin school in Concord,

and at Harvard College (where from 1817 to 1821 he enjoyed a "scholarship" in return for services) young Emerson kindled no fires. His slow growth is recorded in his journal for the next eight years. He assisted at his brother William's Boston "School for Young Ladies" (1821-1825), conducting the enterprise alone the last year. In 1825 he entered Harvard Divinity School; in spite of an interval of illness, he was by 1829 associated with the powerful Henry Ware in the pulpit of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston. That year he married Ellen Tucker, whose death, less than two years later, acutely grieved him throughout his life.

In 1832, in the first flush of a genuine success in the pulpit, he resigned from the ministry. At the time, he told his congregation he could no longer find inherent grace in the observation of the Lord's Supper, and later he said that his ideas of self-reliance and the general divinity of man caused him to conclude that "in order to be a good minister it was necessary to leave the ministry." His decision was not the result of hasty judgment. These ideas (as

Rusk shows in his excellent *Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*) had long been available to him in his study of such nonconformists as Fénelon, George Fox, Luther, and Carlyle. They were later made explicit also in his poem "The Problem," printed among the selections in this volume. Six years after his resignation from the ministry, in his "Divinity School Address" (1838), he clarified his position and made permanent his breach with the church. The transcendental law, Emerson believed, was the "moral law," through which man discovers the nature of God, a living spirit; yet it had been the practice of historical Christianity—"as if God were dead"—to formalize Him and to fundamentalize religion through fixed conventions of dogma and scripture. The true nature of life was energetic and fluid; its transcendental unity resulted from the convergence of all forces upon the energetic truth, the heart of the moral law.

Meanwhile, his personal affairs had taken shape again. After resigning his pulpit, he traveled (1832-1833) in France, Italy, and Great Britain, meeting such writers as Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. All of these had been somewhat influenced by the idealism of recent German philosophy, but Carlyle alone was his contemporary, and the two became lasting friends. In 1833, Emerson launched himself upon the career of public lecturer, which thereafter gave him his modest livelihood, made him a familiar figure in many parts of the country, and supported one of his three trips abroad. In 1835,

he made a second marriage, notably successful, and soon settled in his own house, near the ancestral Old Manse in Concord, where his four children were born. The first-born, Waldo (1836), mitigated Emerson's loss of two younger and much-loved brothers in the two previous years; but Waldo, too, died in his sixth year, in the chain of bereavements that Emerson suffered.

The informal Transcendental Club began to meet at the Manse in 1836, including in its association a number of prominent writers of Boston, and others of Concord, such as Bronson Alcott and later, Thoreau, whom Emerson took for a time into his household. Margaret Fuller was selected as first editor of *The Dial*, their famous little magazine, and Emerson succeeded her for two years (1842-1844). He could not personally bring himself to join their co-operative Brook Farm community, although he supported its theory.

After 1850 he gave much of his thought to national politics, social reforms, and the growing contest over slavery. By this time, however, the bulk of his important work had been published, much of the prose resulting from lectures, sometimes rewritten or consolidated in larger forms. *Nature* (1836), his first book, was followed by his first *Essays*, (1841), *Essays: Second Series* (1844), and *Poems* (1847). Emerson wrote and published his poems sporadically, as though they were by-products, but actually they contain the core of his philosophy, which is essentially lyrical, and they are often its best

expression. The criticism of the day neglected them, or disparaged them for their alleged formal irregularity in an age of metrical conformity. Today they are read in the light of rhythmic principles recovered by Whitman, whom Emerson first defended almost singlehanded; and their greatness is now evident to a generation newly awakened to the symbolism of ideas which is present in the long tradition from John Donne to T. S. Eliot. Emerson authorized a second volume, *May-Day and Other Poems*, in 1867 and a finally revised *Selected Poems* in 1876.

In 1845, Emerson gave the series of lectures published in 1850 as *Representative Men*. He took this series to England in 1847, and visited Paris again before returning to Concord. His later major works include the remarkable *Journals and Letters*, published after his death, the compilation, *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures* (1849), and the provocative essays of *English Traits* (1856) and *The Conduct of Life* (1860).

In 1871 there were evidences that the lofty intellect, now internationally recognized, was beginning to fail. In 1872 his house in Concord was damaged by fire and friends raised a fund to send him abroad and to repair the damage in his absence, but the trip was not sufficient to stem the failing tide of health and memory. He recovered his energies sporadically until 1877, and died in 1882.

It is a familiar truism that Emerson was not an original philosopher, and he fully recognized the fact. "I am too young yet by sev-

eral ages," he wrote, "to compile a code." Yet confronted by his transcendent vision of the unity of life in the metaphysical Absolute, he declared, "I wish to know the laws of this wonderful power, that I may domesticate it." That he succeeded so well in this mission is the evidence of his true originality and his value for following generations of Americans. In the American soil, and in the common sense of his own mind, he "domesticated" the richest experience of many lands and cultures; he is indeed the "transparent eyeball" through which much of the best light of the ages is brought to a focus of usefulness for the present day.

The most recent and best collection of Emerson is *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* 12 vols., Centenary Edition, 1903-1904. The Concord Edition, 1904, was a reprint of this. Supplementary collections are *Uncollected Writings* \* \* \*, edited by C. C. Bigelow, 1912; *The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols., edited by E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes, 1909-1914; *The Heart of Emerson's Journals*, edited by Bliss Perry, 1926, repr. 1959; *Uncollected Lectures*, edited by C. F. Gohdes, 1933; *Young Emerson Speaks* \* \* \*, sermons, edited by A. C. McGiffert, 1938; *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 6 vols., edited by R. L. Rusk, 1939; *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Early Lectures*, edited by S. E. Whicher and R. E. Spiller, 1959. One-volume selections are *The Complete Essays and Other Writings* \* \* \*, edited by Brooks Atkinson, 1940; *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Representative Selections*, edited, with a good introduction, by F. I. Carpenter, 1934.

The definitive biography is R. L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1949. See also G. W. Cooke, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* \* \* \*, 1881; J. E. Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2 vols., 1887; G. E. Woodberry, *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1907. Recent special studies are V. C. Hopkins, *Spire of Form*, 1951; S. Paul, *Emerson's Angle of Vision*, 1952; S. E. Whicher, *Freedom and Fate*, 1953; and F. J. Carpenter, *Emerson Handbook*, 1953.

*The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, compiled by Perry Miller,

1950, is the best introduction to American transcendentalism as a whole and to its literature, excluding works by Emerson and Thoreau.

The texts of Emerson reproduced here are based on the last revised edition published during Emerson's life-

time: *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, 1849; *Essays*, revised 1847 and 1850; *Representative Men*, first edition, 1850; and *Selected Poems*, 1876. Obvious textual errors have been corrected by suitable collation.

## Nature<sup>1</sup>

A subtle chain of countless rings  
The next unto the farthest brings;  
The eye reads omens where it goes,  
And speaks all languages the rose;  
And, striving to be man, the worm  
Mounts through all the spires of form.

## Introduction

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The fore-going generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us, by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy. Every man's condition is a solution in

1. Emerson's first major work, *Nature*, was also the first comprehensive expression of American transcendentalism. For the student it provides a fresh and lyrical intimation of many of the leading ideas that Emerson developed in various later essays and poems. The author first mentioned this book in a diary entry made in 1833, on his return voyage from the first European visit, during which he had met a number of European writers, especially Carlyle. In 1834, when he settled in the Old Manse, his grandfather's home in Concord, he had already written five chapters. He completed the first draft of the volume there, in the very room in which Hawthorne later wrote his *Mosses from an Old Manse*. The small first edition of *Nature*, published anonymously in 1836, gained critical attention, but few general readers. It was not reprinted until 1849, when it was collected in *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*. At that

time Emerson substituted, as epigraph, the present poem, instead of the quotation from Plotinus which had introduced the first edition: "Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul; Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know." The new epigraph supported the concept of evolution presented in *Nature*. Darwin's *Origin of Species* did not appear until 1859, but Emerson had seen the classification of species in 1833 at the Paris Jardin des Plantes, while Lamarck was anticipating Darwin, and Lyell's popular *Geology* emphasized fossil remains. The transcendentalists, and Emerson in particular, regarded theories of evolution as supporting a concept of progress and unity as ancient as the early Greek nature philosophy. These ideas persist throughout *Nature*. The present text is based on the 1849 edition.

hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth. In like manner, nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?

All science has one aim, namely, to find a theory of nature. We have theories of races and of functions, but scarcely yet a remote approach to an idea of creation. We are now so far from the road to truth, that religious teachers dispute and hate each other, and speculative men are esteemed unsound and frivolous. But to a sound judgment, the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence. Its test is, that it will explain all phenomena. Now many are thought not only unexplained but inexplicable; as language, sleep, madness, dreams, beasts, sex.

Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE. In enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum, I shall use the word in both senses;—in its common and in its philosophical import. In inquiries so general as our present one, the inaccuracy is not material; no confusion of thought will occur. *Nature*, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. *Art* is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture. But his operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result.

### I. Nature

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds will separate between him and what he touches. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always pres-

ent, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood.

When we speak of nature in this manner, we have a distinct but most poetical sense in the mind. We mean the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects. It is this which distinguishes the stick of timber of the wood-cutter from the tree of the poet. The charming landscape which I saw this morning is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title.

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food. In the presence of nature a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says,—he is my creature, and maugre<sup>2</sup> all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me. Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head



bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel<sup>3</sup> of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances,—master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right.

Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both. It is necessary to use these pleasures with great temperance. For nature is not always tricked in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic of the nymphs, is overspread with melancholy to-day. Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it. Then there is a kind of contempt of the landscape felt by him who has just lost by death a dear friend.<sup>4</sup> The sky is less grand as it shuts down over less worth in the population.

## II. *Commodity*<sup>5</sup>

Whoever considers the final cause of the world will discern a multitude of uses that enter as parts into that result. They all admit of being thrown into one of the following classes: Commodity; Beauty; Language; and Discipline.

Under the general name of commodity, I rank all those advantages which our senses owe to nature. This, of course, is a benefit which is temporary and mediate, not ultimate, like its service to the soul. Yet although low, it is perfect in its kind, and is the only use of nature which all men apprehend. The misery of man appears like childish petulance, when we explore the steady and prodigal provision that has been made for his support and delight on this green

3. The early editions read "particle." The familiar reading, "parcel," based on a manuscript variant, appeared in the Centenary Edition (1903). Cf. "parcel," in the legal phrase, "part and parcel."

4. Writing this at the age of thirty-two,

Emerson already had "lost by death" his first wife, a bride of eighteen months; and, within the last two years, two brothers.

5. In a sense now unfamiliar, a commodity was whatever satisfied man's physical need or convenience.

ball which floats him through the heavens. What angels invented these splendid ornaments, these rich conveniences, this ocean of air above, this ocean of water beneath, this firmament of earth between? this zodiac of lights, this tent of dropping clouds, this striped coat of climates, this fourfold year? Beasts, fire, water, stones, and corn serve him. The field is at once his floor, his work-yard, his playground, his garden, and his bed.

"More servants wait on man  
Than he'll take notice of."<sup>6</sup>

Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other's hands for the profit of man. The wind sows the seed; the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this; the rain feeds the plant; the plant feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man.

The useful arts are reproductions or new combinations by the wit of man, of the same natural benefactors. He no longer waits for favoring gales, but by means of steam, he realizes the fable of Æolus's bag,<sup>7</sup> and carries the two and thirty winds in the boiler of his boat. To diminish friction, he paves the road with iron bars, and, mounting a coach with a ship-load of men, animals, and merchandise behind him, he darts through the country, from town to town, like an eagle or a swallow through the air. By the aggregate of these aids, how is the face of the world changed, from the era of Noah to that of Napoleon! The private poor man hath cities, ships, canals, bridges, built for him. He goes to the post-office, and the human race run on his errands; to the book-shop, and the human race read and write of all that happens, for him; to the court-house, and nations repair his wrongs. He sets his house upon the road, and the human race go forth every morning, and shovel out the snow, and cut a path for him.

But there is no need of specifying particulars in this class of uses. The catalogue is endless, and the examples so obvious, that I shall leave them to the reader's reflection, with the general remark, that this mercenary benefit is one which has respect to a farther good. A man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work.

#### IV. Language

Language is a third use which Nature subserves to man. Nature is the vehicle of thought, and in a simple, double, and threefold degree.

6. From "Man," by George Herbert (1593-1633).

7. Cf. *Odyssey*, Bk. X. Æolus gave

Odysseus a "bag of favorable gales," but his curious sailors released them all at once, producing a disastrous tempest.

1. Words are signs of natural facts.
2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts.
3. Nature is the symbol of spirit.

1. Words are signs of natural facts. The use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural history: the use of the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation. Every word which is used to express a mortal or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance. *Right*<sup>s</sup> means *straight*; *wrong* means *twisted*. *Spirit* primarily means *wind*; *transgression*, the crossing of a *line*; *supercilious*, the *raising of the eyebrow*. We say the *heart* to express emotion, the *head* to denote thought; and *thought* and *emotion* are words borrowed from sensible things, and now appropriated to spiritual nature. Most of the process by which this transformation is made, is hidden from us in the remote time when language was framed; but the same tendency may be daily observed in children. Children and savages use only nouns or names of things, which they convert into verbs, and apply to analogous mental acts.

2. But this origin of all words that convey a spiritual import,—so conspicuous a fact in the history of language,—is our least debt to nature. It is not words only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. A lamb is innocence; a snake is subtle spite; flowers express to us the delicate affections. Light and darkness are our familiar expression for knowledge and ignorance; and heat for love. Visible distance behind and before us, is respectively our image of memory and hope.

Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men. And the blue sky in which the private earth is buried, the sky with its eternal calm, and full of everlasting orbs, is the type of Reason. That which, intellectually considered, we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator. Spirit hath life in itself. And man in all ages and countries,

5. Emerson refers to the etymological derivations of the following five words.

embodies it in his language, as the FATHER.

It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capricious in these analogies, but that they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him. And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man. All the facts in natural history taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren, like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life. Whole Floras, all Linnaeus' and Buffon's<sup>6</sup> volumes, are dry catalogues of facts; but the most trivial of these facts, the habit of a plant, the organs, or work, or noise of an insect, applied to the illustration of a fact in intellectual philosophy, or, in any way associated to human nature, affects us in the most lively and agreeable manner. The seed of a plant,—to what affecting analogies in the nature of man, is that little fruit made use of, in all discourse, up to the voice of Paul, who calls the human corpse a seed,<sup>7</sup>—"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." The motion of the earth round its axis, and round the sun, makes the day, and the year. These are certain amounts of brute light and heat. But is there no intent of an analogy between man's life and the seasons? And do the seasons gain no grandeur or pathos from that analogy? The instincts of the ant are very unimportant, considered as the ant's; but the moment a ray of relation is seen to extend from it to man, and the little drudge is seen to be a monitor, a little body with a mighty heart, then all its habits, even that said to be recently observed, that it never sleeps, become sublime.

Because of this radical<sup>8</sup> correspondence between visible things and human thoughts, savages, who have only what is necessary, converse in figures. As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols.<sup>9</sup> The same symbols are found to make the original elements of all languages. It has moreover been observed, that the idioms of all languages approach each other in passages of the greatest eloquence and power. And as this is the first language, so is it the last. This immediate dependence of language upon nature, this conversion of an outward phenomenon into a type of somewhat in human life, never loses its power to affect us. It is this which gives that piquancy to the conversation of a strong-natured

6. Linnaeus (Carl von Linné, 1707-1778), Swedish botanist, founded the modern system of plant classification; Comte de Buffon (Georges Louis Le Clerc, 1707-1788), French naturalist, initiated and was an important collaborator on the forty-four-volume *Histoire Naturelle* (finished in 1804), a compre-

hensive formulation of the biological sciences.

7. Cf. I Corinthians xv: 42-44.

8. In the etymological sense: from the Latin *radix*, "a root."

9. This romantic theory of primitive word symbolism, then accepted, has now been superseded.

farmer or back-woodsman, which all men relish.

A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise,—and duplicity and falsehood take place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will, is in a degree lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not; a paper currency is employed, when there is no bullion in the vaults. In due time, the fraud is manifest, and words lose all power to stimulate the understanding or the affections. Hundreds of writers may be found in every long-civilized nation, who for a short time believe, and make others believe, that they see and utter truths, who do not of themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country, those, namely, who hold primarily on nature.

But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it, is a man in alliance with truth and God. The moment our discourse rises above the ground line of familiar facts, and is inflamed with passion or exalted by thought, it clothes itself in images. A man conversing in earnest, if he watch his intellectual processes, will find that a material image, more or less luminous, arises in his mind, contemporaneous with every thought, which furnishes the vestment of the thought. Hence, good writing and brilliant discourse are perpetual allegories. This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made.

These facts may suggest the advantage which the country-life possesses for a powerful mind, over the artificial and curtailed life of cities. We know more from nature than we can at will communicate. Its light flows into the mind evermore, and we forget its presence. The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been nourished by their fair and appeasing changes, year after year, without design and without heed,—shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar of cities or the broil of politics. Long hereafter, amidst agitation and terror in national councils,—in the hour of revolution,—these solemn images shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which the passing events shall awaken. At the call of a noble sentiment, again the woods wave, the pines murmur, the river rolls and shines, and the cattle low upon

the mountains, as he saw and heard them in his infancy. And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands.

3. We are thus assisted by natural objects in the expression of particular meanings. But how great a language to convey such peppercorn<sup>1</sup> informations! Did it need such noble races of creatures, this profusion of forms, this host of orbs in heaven, to furnish man with the dictionary and grammar of his municipal<sup>2</sup> speech? Whilst we use this grand cipher to expedite the affairs of our pot and kettle, we feel that we have not yet put it to its use, neither are able. We are like travellers using the cinders of a volcano to roast their eggs. Whilst we see that it always stands ready to clothe what we would say, we cannot avoid the question whether the characters are not significant of themselves. Have mountains, and waves, and skies, no significance but what we consciously give them, when we employ them as emblems of our thoughts? The world is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass. "The visible world and the relation of its parts, is the dial plate of the invisible." The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics. Thus, "the whole is greater than its part;" "reaction is equal to action;" "the smallest weight may be made to lift the greatest, the difference of weight being compensated by time;" and many the like propositions, which have an ethical as well as physical sense. These propositions have a much more extensive and universal sense when applied to human life, than when confined to technical use.

In like manner, the memorable words of history, and the proverbs of nations, consists usually of a natural fact, selected as a picture or parable of a moral truth. Thus; A rolling stone gathers no moss; A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; A cripple in the right way, will beat a racer in the wrong; Make hay while the sun shines; 'Tis hard to carry a full cup even; Vinegar is the son of wine; The last ounce broke the camel's back; Long-lived trees make roots first;—and the like. In their primary sense these are trivial facts, but we repeat them for the value of their analogical import. What is true of proverbs, is true of all fables, parables, and allegories.

This relation between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men. It appears to men, or it does not appear. When in fortunate hours we ponder this miracle, the wise man doubts, if, at all other times, he is not blind and deaf;

1. Petty; a meaning derived from the ancient use of a peppercorn for the nomi-

nal payment of an obligation.  
2. In its earlier meaning, "local."

———"Can these things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder?"<sup>3</sup>

for the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own shines through it. It is the standing problem which has exercised the wonder and the study of every fine genius since the world began; from the era of the Egyptians and the Brahmins to that of Pythagoras, of Plato, of Bacon, of Leibnitz, of Swedenborg.<sup>4</sup> There sits the Sphinx at the road-side, and from age to age, as each prophet comes by, he tries his fortune at reading her riddle.<sup>5</sup> There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms; and day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali, preëxist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of preceding affections in the world of spirit. A Fact is the end or last issue of spirit. The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world. "Material objects," said a French philosopher, "are necessarily kinds of *scoriae*<sup>6</sup> of the substantial thoughts of the Creator, which must always preserve an exact relation to their first origin; in other words, visible nature must have a spiritual and moral side."

This doctrine is abstruse, and though the images of "garment," "scoriae," "mirror," &c., may stimulate the fancy, we must summon the aid of subtler and more vital expositors to make it plain. "Every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth," —is the fundamental law of criticism. A life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and of virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text. By degrees we may come to know the primitive sense of the permanent objects of nature, so that the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause.

A new interest surprises us, whilst, under the view now suggested, we contemplate the fearful extent and multitude of objects; since "every object rightly seen, unlocks a new faculty of the soul." That which was unconscious truth, becomes, when interpreted and defined

3. *Macbeth*, Act III, Scene iv, ll. 110-112. The first two editions read, erroneously, "Can these things be," for, "Can such things be."

4. All these taught, in one way or another, a universe "transparent" in Emerson's meaning above. The Greek Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.), like the Egyptian and Brahmin mystics, taught the transmigration of souls; the Greek Plato (428-347 B.C.) was the father of western philosophical idealism; Francis Bacon (1561-1626) British founder of inductive science, was mystical in his religious philosophy; the German Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-

1716) promulgated a philosophical optimism later satirized by such determinists as Voltaire; and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish religious thinker who later became Emerson's example for "The Mystic" in *Representative Men*.

5. In classic myth, the Sphinx of Thebes slew all travelers unable to solve her riddle. At last Oedipus did so; whereupon, as predicted, she killed herself and he became king, with tragic consequences immortalized in Sophocles' trilogy of *Oedipus*. Cf. "The Sphinx," below.

6. Slag from the smelting of metals.

in an object, a part of the domain of knowledge,—a new weapon in the magazine of power.

## VI. *Idealism*

Thus is the unspeakable but intelligible and practicable meaning of the world conveyed to man, the immortal pupil, in every object of sense. To this one end of Discipline, all parts of nature conspire.

A noble doubt perpetually suggests itself,—whether this end be not the Final Cause of the Universe; and whether nature outwardly exists. It is a sufficient account of that Appearance we call the World, that God will teach a human mind, and so makes it the receiver of a certain number of congruent sensations, which we call sun and moon, man and woman, house and trade. In my utter impotence to test the authenticity of the report of my senses, to know whether the impressions they make on me correspond with outlying objects, what difference does it make, whether Orion is up there in heaven, or some god paints the image in the firmament of the soul? The relations of parts and the end of the whole remaining the same, what is the difference, whether land and sea interact, and worlds revolve and intermingle without number or end,—deep yawning under deep,<sup>8</sup> and galaxy balancing galaxy, throughout absolute space,—or whether, without relations of time and space, the same appearances are inscribed in the constant faith of man? Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the apocalypse<sup>9</sup> of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me. Be it what it may, it is ideal to me so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses.

The frivolous make themselves merry with the Ideal theory,<sup>1</sup> as if its consequences were burlesque; as if it affected the stability of nature. It surely does not. God never jests with us, and will not compromise the end of nature by permitting any inconsequence in its procession. Any distrust of the permanence of laws would paralyze the faculties of man. Their permanence is sacredly respected, and his faith therein is perfect. The wheels and springs of man are all set to the hypothesis of the permanence of nature. We are not built like a ship to be tossed, but like a house to stand. It is a natural consequence of this structure, that so long as the active powers predominate over the reflective, we resist with indignation any hint that nature is more short-lived or mutable than spirit. The broker, the wheelwright, the carpenter, the tollman, are much displeased at the intimation.

But whilst we acquiesce entirely in the permanence of natural laws, the question of the absolute existence of nature still remains open.

8. Cf. Psalms xlii: 7.

9. A prophetic revelation.

1. That is, they make a jest of the transcendental belief (suggested in the

two previous paragraphs) that the essential reality of the thing inheres in the idea, to be sought in the mind.



It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena, as of heat, water, azote;<sup>2</sup> but to lead us to regard nature as phenomenon, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect.

To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature. In their view man and nature are indissolubly joined. Things are ultimates, and they never look beyond their sphere. The presence of Reason mars this faith. The first effort of thought tends to relax this despotism of the senses which binds us to nature as if we were a part of it, and shows us nature aloof, and, as it were, afloat. Until this higher agency intervened, the animal eye sees, with wonderful accuracy, sharp outlines and colored surfaces. When the eye of Reason opens, to outline and surface are at once added grace and expression. These proceed from imagination and affection, and abate somewhat of the angular distinctness of objects. If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. The best moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God.

Let us proceed to indicate the effects of culture.

1. Our first institution in the Ideal philosophy is a hint from Nature herself.

Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us. Certain mechanical changes, a small alteration in our local position, apprises us of a dualism. We are strangely affected by seeing the shore from a moving ship, from a balloon, or through the tints of an unusual sky. The least change in our point of view gives the whole world a pictorial air. A man who seldom rides, needs only to get into a coach and traverse his own town, to turn the street into a puppet-show. The men, the women,—talking, running, bartering, fighting,—the earnest mechanic, the loungee, the beggar, the boys, the dogs, are unrealized<sup>3</sup> at once, or, at least, wholly detached from all relation to the observer, and seen as apparent, not substantial beings. What new thoughts are suggested by seeing a face<sup>4</sup> of country quite familiar, in the rapid movement of the railroad car! Nay, the most wonted objects, (make a very slight change in the point of vision,) please us most. In a camera obscura,<sup>5</sup> the butcher's cart, and the figure of one of our own family amuse us. So a portrait of a well-known face gratifies us. Turn the eyes upside down, by looking at the landscape through your legs, and how agreeable is the picture, though you have

2. Nitrogen.

3. *I.e.*, deprived of reality.

4. In the archaic sense, meaning "view."

5. An optical instrument, the ancestor of the camera.

seen it any time these twenty years!

In these cases, by mechanical means, is suggested the difference between the observer and the spectacle—between man and nature. Hence arises a pleasure mixed with awe; I may say, a low degree of the sublime is felt, from the fact, probably, that man is hereby apprised that whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable.

2. In a higher manner the poet communicates the same pleasure. By a few strokes he delineates, as on air, the sun, the mountain, the camp, the city, the hero, the maiden, not different from what we know them, but only lifted from the ground and afloat before the eye. He unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes them anew. Possessed himself by a heroic passion, he uses matter as symbols of it. The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to his thoughts. The one esteems nature as rooted and fast; the other, as fluid, and impresses his being thereon. To him, the refractory world is ductile and flexible; he invests dust and stones with humanity, and makes them the words of the Reason. The Imagination may be defined to be the use which the Reason makes of the material world. Shakespeare possesses the power of subordinating nature for the purposes of expression, beyond all poets. His imperial muse tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, and uses it to embody any caprice of thought that is uppermost in his mind. The remotest spaces of nature are visited, and the farthest sundered things are brought together, by a subtle spiritual connection. We are made aware that magnitude of material things is relative, and all objects shrink and expand to serve the passion of the poet. Thus in his sonnets, the lays of birds, the scents and dyes of flowers he finds to be the *shadow* of his beloved;<sup>6</sup> time, which keeps her from him, is his *chest*;<sup>7</sup> the suspicion she has awakened, is her *ornament*;

The ornament of beauty is Suspect,  
A crow which flies in heaven's sweetest air.<sup>8</sup>

His passion is not the fruit of chance; it swells, as he speaks, to a city, or a state,

No, it was builded far from accident;  
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
Under the brow of thralling discontent;  
It fears not policy, that heretic,  
That works on leases of short numbered hours,  
But all alone stands hugely politic.<sup>9</sup>

6. Cf. Shakespeare, Sonnet XCVIII.

7. Cf. Shakespeare, Sonnet LXV, l. 10.

8. Shakespeare, Sonnet LXX, ll. 3-4.

For "which" read "that."

9. From Shakespeare, Sonnet CXXIV, with slight alteration.

In the strength of his constancy, the Pyramids<sup>1</sup> seem to him recent and transitory. The freshness of youth and love dazzles him with its resemblance to morning;

Take those lips away  
Which so sweetly were forsworn;  
And those eyes,—the break of day,  
Lights that do mislead the morn.<sup>2</sup>

The wild beauty of this hyperbole, I may say in passing, it would not be easy to match in literature.

This transfiguration which all material objects undergo through the passion of the poet,—this power which he exerts to dwarf the great, to magnify the small,—might be illustrated by a thousand examples from his Plays. I have before me the *Tempest*, and will cite only these few lines.

ARIEL. The strong based promontory  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up  
The pine and cedar.<sup>3</sup>

Prospero calls for music to soothe the frantic Alonzo, and his companions;

A solemn air, and the best comforter  
To an unsettled fancy, cure my brains  
Now useless, boiled within thy skull.<sup>4</sup>

Again;

The charm dissolves apace,  
And, as the morning steals upon the night,  
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses  
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle  
Their clearer reason.

Their understanding  
Begins to swell: and the approaching tide  
Will shortly fill the reasonable shores  
That now lie foul and muddy.<sup>5</sup>

The perception of real affinities between events (that is to say, of *ideal* affinities, for those only are real), enables the poet thus to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world, and to assert the predominance of the soul.

3. Whilst thus the poet animates nature with his own thoughts,

1. Cf. Shakespeare, Sonnet CXXIII, l. 2.

2. See Shakespeare's *Measure For Measure*, the song opening Act IV, Scene 1. Lines 1-4 are here slightly altered.

3. *The Tempest*, Act V, Scene 1, ll. 46-48; but the speaker is Prospero, not Ariel.

4. *Ibid.* Act V, Scene 1, ll. 58-60.

5. *Ibid.* Act V, Scene 1, ll. 64-68, 79-82.

he differs from the philosopher only herein, that the one proposes Beauty as his main end; the other Truth. But the philosopher, not less than the poet, postpones the apparent order and relations of things to the empire of thought. "The problem of philosophy," according to Plato, "is, for all that exists conditionally, to find a ground unconditioned and absolute."<sup>6</sup> It proceeds on the faith that a law determines all phenomena, which being known, the phenomena can be predicted. That law, when in the mind, is an idea. Its beauty is infinite. The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both. Is not the charm of one of Plato's or Aristotle's definitions strictly like that of the *Antigone* of Sophocles?<sup>7</sup> It is, in both cases, that a spiritual life has been imparted to nature; that the solid seeming block of matter has been pervaded and dissolved by a thought; that this feeble human being has penetrated the vast masses of nature with an informing soul, and recognized itself in their harmony, that is, seized their law. In physics, when this is attained, the memory disburthens itself of its cumbrous catalogues of particulars, and carries centuries of observation in a single formula.

Thus even in physics, the material is degraded before the spiritual. The astronomer, the geometer, rely on their irrefragable analysis, and disdain the results of observation. The sublime remark of Euler<sup>8</sup> on his law of arches, "This will be found contrary to all experience, yet is true;" had already transferred nature into the mind, and left matter like an outcast corpse.

4. Intellectual science has been observed to beget invariably a doubt of the existence of matter. Turgot<sup>9</sup> said, "He that has never doubted the existence of matter, may be assured he has no aptitude for metaphysical inquiries." It fastens the attention upon immortal necessary uncreated natures, that is, upon Ideas; and in their presence we feel that the outward circumstance is a dream and a shade. Whilst we wait in this Olympus of gods, we think of nature as an appendix to the soul. We ascend into their region, and know that these are the thoughts of the Supreme Being. "These are they who were set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or even the earth was. When he prepared the heavens, they were there; when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountains of the deep. Then they were by him, as one brought up with him. Of them took he counsel."<sup>1</sup>

Their influence is proportionate. As objects of science they are accessible to few men. Yet all men are capable of being raised by piety

6. See the *Republic*, Book V.

7. Sophocles (496?-406 B.C.) produced in the *Antigone* one of the most moving of the great Greek tragedies.

8. Leonhard Euler (1707-1783), Swiss mathematician.

9. Anne Robert Jacques Turgot (1727-1781), French liberal, statesman and economist.

1. Condensed paraphrase of Proverbs viii: 23, 27, 28, 30

or by passion, into their region. And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, himself divine. Like a new soul, they renew the body. We become physically nimble and light-some; we tread on air; life is no longer irksome, and we think it will never be so. No man fears age or misfortune or death in their serene company, for he is transported out of the district of change. Whilst we behold unveiled the nature of Justice and Truth, we learn the difference between the absolute and the conditional or relative. We apprehend the absolute. As it were, for the first time, *we exist*. We become immortal, for we learn that time and space are relations of matter; that with a perception of truth or a virtuous will they have no affinity.

5. Finally, religion and ethics, which may be fitly called the practice of ideas, or the introduction of ideas into life, have an analogous effect with all lower culture, in degrading nature and suggesting its dependence on spirit. Ethics and religion differ herein; that the one is the system of human duties commencing from man; the other, from God. Religion includes the personality of God; Ethics does not. They are one to our present design. They both put nature under foot. The first and last lesson of religion is, "The things that are seen, are temporal; the things that are unseen, are eternal."<sup>2</sup> It puts an affront upon nature. It does that for the unschooled, which philosophy does for Berkeley and Viasa.<sup>3</sup> The uniform language that may be heard in the churches of the most ignorant sects is,—“Contemn the unsubstantial shows of the world; they are vanities, dreams, shadows, unrealities; seek the realities of religion.” The devotee flouts nature. Some theosophists<sup>4</sup> have arrived at a certain hostility and indignation towards nature, as the Manichean<sup>5</sup> and Plotinus.<sup>6</sup> They distrusted in themselves any looking back to these flesh-pots of Egypt.<sup>7</sup> Plotinus was ashamed of his body. In short, they might all say of matter, what Michael Angelo said of external beauty, “It is the frail and weary weed, in which God dresses the soul which he has called into time.”

It appears that motion, poetry, physical and intellectual science, and religion, all tend to affect our convictions of the reality of the external world. But I own there is something ungrateful in expanding too curiously the particulars of the general proposition, that all cul-

2. Cf. II Corinthians iv: 18.

3. George Berkeley (1685–1753), English churchman and thinker, whose idealistic philosophy is here associated with the spirit of Viasa, a legendary Hindu personage credited with the authorship of a substantial part of the Sanskrit scriptures.

4. The term is here broadly applied to theologians who claim direct knowledge of God by mystical revelation.

5. An adherent to the doctrine of Mani, or Manes, a third century Persian sage who asserted that the body was produced by evil or darkness, but the soul streams from the principle of goodness or light.

6. Plotinus (204?–270? A.D.), a Roman Platonist of Egyptian origin, gave a mystical and symbolic interpretation to the doctrines of Plato.

7. Cf. Exodus xvi: 3.

ture tends to imbue us with idealism. I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother, nor soil my gentle nest. I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man, wherein to establish man all right education tends; as the ground which to attain is the object of human life, that is, of man's connection with nature. Culture inverts the vulgar views of nature, and brings the mind to call that apparent which it uses to call real, and that real which it uses to call visionary. Children, it is true, believe in the external world. The belief that it appears only, is an afterthought, but with culture this faith will as surely arise on the mind as did the first.

The advantage of the ideal theory over the popular faith is this, that it presents the world in precisely that view which is most desirable to the mind. It is, in fact, the view which Reason, both speculative and practical,<sup>8</sup> that is, philosophy and virtue, take. For seen in the light of thought, the world always is phenomenal; and virtue subordinates it to the mind. Idealism sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture which God paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul. Therefore the soul holds itself off from a too trivial and microscopic study of the universal tablet. It respects the end too much to immerse itself in the means. It sees something more important in Christianity than the scandals of ecclesiastical history or the niceties of criticism; and, very incurious concerning persons or miracles, and not at all disturbed by chasms of historical evidence, it accepts from God the phenomenon, as it finds it, as the pure and awful form of religion in the world. It is not hot and passionate at the appearance of what it calls its own good or bad fortune, at the union or opposition of other persons. No man is its enemy. It accepts whatsoever befalls, as part of its lesson. It is a watcher more than a doer, and it is a doer, only that it may the better watch.

## VII. *Spirit*

It is essential to a true theory of nature and of man, that it should contain somewhat progressive. Uses that are exhausted or that may be, and facts that end in the statement, cannot be all that is true of this brave lodging wherein man is harbored, and wherein all his faculties find appropriate and endless exercise. And all the uses of nature admit of being summed in one, which yields the activity of man an infinite scope. Through all its kingdoms, to the

8. Kant's distinction between the practical Reason (understanding), which regulates behavior, and speculative

Reason, which supports metaphysical thought, was a familiar concept among transcendentalists.

suburbs and outskirts of things, it is faithful to the cause whence it had its origin. It always speaks of Spirit. It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us.

The aspect of Nature is devout. Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship.

Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. We can foresee God in the coarse, and, as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define and describe himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages. That essence refuses to be recorded in propositions, but when man has worshipped him intellectually, the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it.

When we consider Spirit, we see that the views already presented do not include the whole circumference of man. We must add some related thoughts.

Three problems are put by nature to the mind: What is matter? Whence is it? and Whereto? The first of these questions only, the ideal theory answers. Idealism saith: matter is a phenomenon, not a substance. Idealism acquaints us with the total disparity between the evidence of our own being and the evidence of the world's being. The one is perfect; the other, incapable of any assurance; the mind is a part of the nature of things; the world is a divine dream, from which we may presently awake to the glories and certainties of day. Idealism is a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry. Yet, if it only deny the existence of matter, it does not satisfy the demands of the spirit. It leaves God out of me. It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end. Then the heart resists it, because it balks the affections in denying substantive being to men and women. Nature is so pervaded with human life that there is something of humanity in all and in every particular. But this theory makes nature foreign to me, and does not account for that consanguinity which we acknowledge to it.

Let it stand then, in the present state of our knowledge, merely as a useful introductory hypothesis, serving to apprise us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world.

But when, following the invisible steps of thought, we come to inquire, Whence is matter? and Whereto? many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man; that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each

entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws at his need inexhaustible power. Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man? Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite. This view, which admonishes me where the sources of wisdom and power lie, and points to virtue as to

"The golden key  
Which opes the palace of eternity,"<sup>9</sup>

carries upon its face the highest certificate of truth, because it animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul.

The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us. It is, therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind. It is a fixed point whereby we may measure our departure. As we degenerate, the contrast between us and our house is more evident. We are as much strangers in nature as we are aliens from God. We do not understand the notes of birds. The fox and the deer run away from us; the bear and tiger rend us. We do not know the uses of more than a few plants, as corn and the apple, the potato and the vine. Is not the landscape, every glimpse of which hath a grandeur, a face of him? Yet this may show us what discord is between man and nature, for you cannot freely admire a noble landscape if laborers are digging in the field hard by. The poet finds something ridiculous in his delight until he is out of the sight of men.<sup>1</sup>

1833-1836

1836

9. John Milton, *Comus*, ll. 13-14.

1. A final chapter, called "Prospects," follows.



## The American Scholar<sup>6</sup>

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

I greet you on the re-commencement of our literary year.<sup>7</sup> Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor. We do not meet for games of strength or skill, for the recitation of histories, tragedies, and odes, like the ancient Greeks; for parliaments of love and poesy, like the Troubadours; nor for the advancement of science,<sup>8</sup> like our contemporaries<sup>9</sup> in the British and European capitals. Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. As such, it is precious as the sign of an indestructible instinct. Perhaps the time is already come, when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggish intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions, that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt, that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp,<sup>1</sup> which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years?

In this hope I accept the topic which not only usage, but the nature of our association, seem to prescribe to this day,—the AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Year by year, we come up hither to read one more chapter of his biography. Let us inquire what light new days and events have thrown on his character and his hopes.

It is one of those fables which, out of an unknown antiquity, con-

6. The Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard College on August 31, 1837, like the guns of its author's "embattled farmers," was "heard round the world," the first clarion of an American literary renaissance. Emerson had no such heroic expectations; he had modestly recorded his compact with his destiny in his journal a month before: "If the All-wise would give me light, I should write for the Cambridge men a theory of the Scholar's office." But Lowell, remembering thirty-four years later the "enthusiasm of approval" (in "Thoreau," *My Study Windows*, 1871), saw the awakening of a spiritual epoch: "The \* \* \* Revolution [had made us] politically independent, but we were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought till Emerson cut the cable. \* \* \*"

Holmes's *obiter dictum*, "Our intellectual Declaration of Independence," however familiar, is still final. The address was published in 1837 and again in 1838; as *Man Thinking: An Oration*, in London in 1844; and as one of the essays in the collection *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures* (1849). The present text is based on the 1849 edition.

7. I.e., "our college year," then customarily beginning about September 1.

8. The development of learned associations abroad and the research of European universities had then no parallel in America.

9. The 1849 text read "co-temporaries"; corrected in later editions.

1. The constellation Lyra, containing Vega, the fourth brightest star of the heavens, to which Emerson refers.

vey an unlooked-for wisdom, that the gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself;<sup>2</sup> just as the hand was divided into fingers, the better to answer its end.

The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is One Man,—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the *divided* or social state, these functions are parcelled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The fable implies, that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man.

Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney, a statute-book; the mechanic, a machine; the sailor, a rope of a ship.

In this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state, he is *Man Thinking*. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking.

In this view of him, as *Man Thinking*, the theory of his office is contained. Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites. Is not, indeed, every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? But the old oracle said, "All things have two handles: beware of the wrong one." In life, too often, the scholar errs with mankind and forfeits his privilege. Let us see him in his school, and consider him in reference to the main influences he receives.

I. The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day, the sun; and, after sunset,

2. Emerson was familiar with a version of this fable in Plato, the *Symposium*; and with another, "Of Brotherly

Love," in Plutarch's *Morals* (E. W. Emerson, Centenary Edition, Vol. I, p. 417).

night and her stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find,—so entire, so boundless. Far, too, as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference,—in the mass and in the particle, nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. Classification begins. To the young mind, every thing is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things, and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground, whereby contrary and remote things cohere, and flower out from one stem. It presently learns, that since the dawn of history, there has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts. But what is classification but the perceiving that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also a law of the human mind? The astronomer discovers that geometry, a pure abstraction of the human mind, is the measure of planetary motion. The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts. The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact; one after another, reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and their law, and goes on for ever to animate the last fibre of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight.

Thus to him, to this school-boy under the bending dome of day, is suggested, that he and it proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that Root? Is not that the soul of his soul?—A thought too bold,—a dream too wild. Yet when this spiritual light shall have revealed the law of more earthly natures,—when he has learned to worship the soul, and to see that the natural philosophy that now is, is only the first gropings of its gigantic hand, he shall look forward to an ever expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator.<sup>3</sup> He shall see, that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal, and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And, in fine, the

3. "Whether or no there be a God, it is certain that there will be." Translation in Emerson's *Journals* from a French source (Centenary Edition, Vol. I, p. 418).

ancient precept, "Know thyself," and the modern precept, "Study nature," become at last one maxim.

II. The next great influence<sup>4</sup> into the spirit of the scholar, is, the mind of the Past,—in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions, that mind is inscribed. Books are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth,—learn the amount of this influence more conveniently,—by considering their value alone.

The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him, life; it went out from him, truth. It came to him, short-lived actions; it went out from him, immortal thoughts. It came to him, business; it went from him, poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing.

Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone, of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect. As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity, as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation,—the act of thought,—is transferred to the record. The poet chanting, was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled, the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly, the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry, if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon,<sup>5</sup> have

4. As by Latin derivation. "inflowing."

5. These were then standard authorities for the young student: Marcus Tullius

Cicero (106–43 B.C.), both for his orations and his moral philosophy; John Locke (1632–1704), whose theory of

given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books.

Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm. Hence, the book-learned class, who value books, as such; not as related to nature and the human constitution, but as making a sort of Third Estate<sup>6</sup> with the world and the soul. Hence, the restorers of readings, the emendators, the bibliomaniacs of all degrees.

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire. I had better never see a book, than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although, in almost all men, obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or creates. In this action, it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence, it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they,—let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hind-head: man hopes: genius creates. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux<sup>7</sup> of the Deity is not his;—cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame. There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair.

On the other part, instead of being its own seer, let it receive from another mind its truth, though it were in torrents of light, without periods of solitude, inquest, and self-recovery, and a fatal disservice is done. Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over-influence. The literature of every nation bears me witness. The English dramatic poets have Shakspearized now for two hundred years.

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading, so it be sternly subordinated. Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. But when the intervals of darkness come, as come

knowledge dominated eighteenth-century thought; and Francis Bacon (1561–1626), British pioneer of inductive science.

6. Under the French monarchy, the "common" people; therefore, a term in bad odor with democrats (the clergy and nobles formed the first two estates).

7. "Outflowing;" cf. "influence," above. Emerson may be alluding to the ancient theory of "effluxes" or "simulacra" propounded by Empedocles, which holds that only like perceives like. Here the interpretation would be that only the creative man understands the Deity.

they must,—when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw their shining,—we repair to the lamps which were kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is. We hear, that we may speak. The Arabian proverb says, “A fig tree, looking on a fig tree, becometh fruitful.”

It is remarkable, the character of the pleasure we derive from the best books. They impress us with the conviction, that one nature wrote and the same reads. We read the verses of one of the great English poets, of Chaucer, of Marvell, of Dryden, with the most modern joy,<sup>8</sup>—with a pleasure, I mean, which is in great part caused by the abstraction of all *time* from their verses. There is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when this poet, who lived in some past world, two or three hundred years ago, says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had well nigh thought and said. But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of all minds, we should suppose some preëstablished harmony, some foresight of souls that were to be, and some preparation of stores for their future wants, like the fact observed in insects, who lay up food before death for the young grub they shall never see.

I would not be hurried by any love of system, by any exaggeration of instincts, to underrate the Book. We all know, that, as the human body can be nourished on any food, though it were boiled grass and the broth of shoes, so the human mind can be fed by any knowledge. And great and heroic men have existed, who had almost no other information than by the printed page. I only would say that it needs a strong head to bear that diet. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says, “He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry out the wealth of the Indies.”<sup>9</sup> There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world.<sup>1</sup> We then see, what is always true, that, as the seer’s hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume. The discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakspeare, only that least part,—only the authentic utterances of the oracle;—all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato’s and Shakspeare’s.

Of course, there is a portion of reading quite indispensable to a

8. The timeless appeal of Chaucer and Dryden is self-evident, but a revival of interest in the poetry of Andrew Marvell (1621–1678) did not occur until the 1920’s.

9. Boswell had reported Dr. Johnson as repeating this “Spanish” proverb in al-

most the same words and context (*Life of Dr. Johnson*, Everyman edition, Vol. II, p. 216).

1. Emerson had written the three previous sentences in his *Journal* ten months earlier (October 29, 1836; *Journals*, Vol. IV, p. 254).

wise man. History and exact science he must learn by laborious reading. Colleges, in like manner, have their indispensable office,—to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame. Thought and knowledge are natures in which apparatus and pretension avail nothing. Gowns, and pecuniary foundations, though of towns of gold, can never counter-vail the least sentence or syllable of wit.<sup>2</sup> Forget this, and our American colleges will recede in their public importance, whilst they grow richer every year.

III. There goes in the world a notion, that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian,—as unfit for any handiwork or public labor as a penknife for an axe. The so-called “practical men” sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing. I have heard it said that the clergy,—who are always, more universally than any other class, the scholars of their day,—are addressed as women; that the rough, spontaneous conversation of men they do not hear, but only a mincing and diluted speech. They are often virtually disfranchised; and, indeed, there are advocates for their celibacy. As far as this is true of the studious classes, it is not just and wise. Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet man. Without it, thought can never ripen into truth. Whilst the world hangs before the eye as a cloud of beauty, we cannot even see its beauty. Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not.

The world,—this shadow of the soul, or *other me*, lies wide around. Its attractions are the keys which unlock my thoughts and make me acquainted with myself. I run eagerly into this resounding tumult. I grasp the hands of those next me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct, that so shall the dumb abyss be vocal with speech. I pierce its order; I dissipate its fear; I dispose of it within the circuit of my expanding life. So much only of life as I know by experience, so much of the wilderness have I vanquished and planted, or so far have I extended my being, my dominion. I do not see how any man can afford, for the sake of his nerves and his nap, to spare any action in which he can partake. It is pearls and rubies to his discourse. Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom. The true scholar grudges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power.

2. In the archaic but fundamental meaning: “knowledge,” “intellect.”

It is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products. A strange process too, this, by which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry leaf is converted into satin.<sup>3</sup> The manufacture goes forward at all hours.

The actions and events of our childhood and youth, are now matters of calmest observation. They lie like fair pictures in the air. Not so with our recent actions,—with the business which we now have in hand. On this we are quite unable to speculate. Our affections as yet circulate through it. We no more feel or know it, than we feel the feet, or the hand, or the brain of our body. The new deed is yet a part of life,—remains for a time immersed in our unconscious life. In some contemplative hour, it detaches itself from the life like a ripe fruit, to become a thought of the mind. Instantly it is raised, transfigured; the corruptible has put on incorruption.<sup>4</sup> Henceforth it is an object of beauty, however base its origin and neighborhood. Observe, too, the impossibility of antedating this act. In its grub state, it cannot fly, it cannot shine, it is a dull grub. But suddenly, without observation, the selfsame thing unfurls beautiful wings, and is an angel of wisdom. So is there no fact, no event, in our private history, which shall not, sooner or later, lose its adhesive, inert form, and astonish us by soaring from our body into the empyrean. Cradle and infancy, school and playground, the fear of boys, and dogs, and ferules, the love of little maids and berries, and many another fact that once filled the whole sky, are gone already; friend and relative, profession and party, town and country, nation and world, must also soar and sing.

Of course, he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions, has the richest return of wisdom. I will not shut myself out of this globe of action, and transplant an oak into a flower-pot, there to hunger and pine; nor trust the revenue of some single faculty, and exhaust one vein of thought, much like those Savoyards,<sup>5</sup> who, getting their livelihood by carving shepherds, shepherdesses, and smoking Dutchmen, for all Europe, went out one day to the mountain to find stock, and discovered that they had whittled up the last of their pine-trees. Authors we have, in numbers, who have written out their vein, and who, moved by a commendable prudence, sail for Greece or Palestine, follow the trapper into the prairie, or ramble round Algiers, to replenish their merchantable stock.

If it were only for a vocabulary, the scholar would be covetous of action. Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town,—in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end

3. *I.e.*, silkworms feed on mulberry leaves.

4. *Cf.* I Corinthians xv: 54.

5. Inhabitants of Savoy, now a province of southeast France, then still divided with Italy.



of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the poverty or the splendor of his speech. Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.

But the final value of action, like that of books, and better than books, is, that it is a resource. That great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring and expiring of the breath; in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the sea; in day and night; in heat and cold; and, as yet more deeply ingrained in every atom and every fluid, is known to us under the name of Polarity,—these “fits of easy transmission and reflection,” as Newton<sup>6</sup> called them, are the law of nature because they are the law of spirit.

The mind now thinks; now acts; and each fit reproduces the other. When the artist has exhausted his materials, when the fancy no longer paints, when thoughts are no longer apprehended and books are a weariness,—he has always the resource to *live*. Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreats to its source. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think. Does he lack organ or medium to impart his truths? He can still fall back on this elemental force of living them. This is a total act. Thinking is a partial act. Let the grandeur of justice shine in his affairs. Let the beauty of affection cheer his lowly roof. Those “far from fame,” who dwell and act with him, will feel the force of his constitution in the doings and passages of the day better than it can be measured by any public and designed display. Time shall teach him, that the scholar loses no hour which the man lives. Herein he unfolds the sacred germ of his instinct, screened from influence. What is lost in seemliness is gained in strength. Not out of those, on whom systems of education have exhausted their culture, comes the helpful giant to destroy the old or to build the new, but out of unhand-selled<sup>7</sup> savage nature, out of terrible Druids and Berserkirs come at last Alfred<sup>8</sup> and Shakspeare.

I hear therefore with joy whatever is beginning to be said of the dignity and necessity of labor to every citizen. There is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade, for learned as well as for unlearned hands.

6. Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), English mathematician, the pioneer of modern physical science. The phrase is from *Optics* (1704), the summation of his researches in light.

7. A “hand-sel” was an inaugural gift for good luck. Here the word is used in its

figurative meaning: “unencouraged,” “unappreciated.”

8. Druids were prehistoric Celtic priests; berserkers, incredibly savage warriors of Norse mythology. Alfred (849–899), greatest of the Saxon kings, was a patriot, lawgiver, and father of English prose.

And labor is everywhere welcome; always we are invited to work; only be this limitation observed, that a man shall not for the sake of wider activity sacrifice any opinion to the popular judgments and modes of action.

I have now spoken of the education of the scholar by nature, by books, and by action. It remains to say somewhat of his duties.

They are such as become Man Thinking. They may all be comprised in self-trust. The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. He plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation. Flamsteed and Herschel,<sup>9</sup> in their glazed observatories, may catalogue the stars with the praise of all men, and, the results being splendid and useful, honor is sure. But he, in his private observatory, cataloguing obscure and nebulous stars of the human mind, which as yet no man has thought of as such,—watching days and months, sometimes, for a few facts; correcting still his old records;—must relinquish display and immediate fame. In the long period of his preparation, he must betray often an ignorance and shiftlessness in popular arts, incurring the disdain of the able who shoulder him aside. Long he must stammer in his speech; often forego the living for the dead. Worse yet, he must accept,—how often! poverty and solitude. For the ease and pleasure of treading the old road, accepting the fashions, the education, the religion of society, he takes the cross of making his own, and, of course, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed; and the state of virtual hostility in which he seems to stand to society, and especially to educated society. For all this loss and scorn, what offset? He is to find consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature. He is one, who raises himself from private considerations, and breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts. He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart. He is to resist the vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism, by preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse, and the conclusions of history. Whatsoever oracles the human heart, in all emergencies, in all solemn hours, has uttered as its commentary on the world of actions,—these he shall receive and impart. And whatsoever new verdict Reason from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of to-day,—this he shall hear and promulgate.

These being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. He and he only

9. John Flamsteed (1646–1719), British astronomer; Sir [Frederick] William Herschel (1738–1822), his sister, Caro-

line, and his son, John Frederick William, were also astronomers, prominent during Emerson's lifetime.

knows the world. The world of any moment is the merest appearance. Some great decorum,<sup>1</sup> some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man, is cried up by half mankind and cried down by the other half, as if all depended on this particular up or down. The odds are that the whole question is not worth the poorest thought which the scholar has lost in listening to the controversy. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom. In silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction, let him hold by himself; add observation to observation, patient of neglect, patient of reproach, and bide his own time,—happy enough, if he can satisfy himself alone, that this day he has seen something truly. Success treads on every right step. For the instinct is sure, that prompts him to tell his brother what he thinks. He then learns, that in going down into the secrets of his own mind, he has descended into the secrets of all minds. He learns that he who has mastered any law in his private thoughts, is master to that extent of all men whose language he speaks, and of all into whose language his own can be translated. The poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that, which men in crowded cities find true for them also. The orator distrusts at first the fitness of his frank confessions,—his want of knowledge of the persons he addresses,—until he finds that he is the complement of his hearers;—that they drink his words because he fulfils for them their own nature; the deeper he dives into his privatest, secretest presentiment, to his wonder he finds, this is the most acceptable, most public, and universally true. The people delight in it; the better part of every man feels, *This is my music; this is myself.*

In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be,—free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom, “without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution.” Brave; for fear is a thing, which a scholar by his very function puts behind him. Fear always springs from ignorance. It is a shame to him if his tranquillity, amid dangerous times, arise from the presumption that, like children and women, his is a protected class; or if he seek a temporary peace by the diversion of his thoughts from politics or vexed questions, hiding his head like an ostrich in the flowering bushes, peeping into microscopes, and turning rhymes, as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. So is the danger a danger still; so is the fear worse. Manlike let him turn and face it. Let him look into its eye and search its nature, inspect its origin,—see the whelping of this lion,—which lies no great way back; he will then find in himself a perfect comprehension of its nature and extent;

1. In the Latin sense: a critical code or standard.

he will have made his hands meet on the other side, and can henceforth defy it, and pass on superior. The world is his, who can see through its pretension. What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what overgrown error you behold, is there only by sufferance,—by your sufferance. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow.

Yes, we are the cowed,—we the trustless. It is a mischievous notion that we are come late into nature; that the world was finished a long time ago. As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever to so much of his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin, it is flint. They adapt themselves to it as they may; but in proportion as a man has any thing in him divine, the firmament flows before him and takes his signet and form. Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind. They are the kings of the world who give the color of their present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men by the cheerful serenity of their carrying the matter, that this thing which they do, is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest. The great man makes the great thing. Wherever Macdonald sits, there is the head of the table.<sup>2</sup> Linnæus makes botany the most alluring of studies, and wins it from the farmer and the herb-woman; Davy, chemistry; and Cuvier, fossils.<sup>3</sup> The day is always his who works in it with serenity and great aims. The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth, as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon.

For this self-trust, the reason is deeper than can be fathomed,—darker than can be enlightened. I might not carry with me the feeling of my audience in stating my own belief. But I have already shown the ground of my hope, in adverting to the doctrine that man is one. I believe man has been wronged; he has wronged himself. He has almost lost the light that can lead him back to his prerogatives. Men are become of no account. Men in history, men in the world of to-day, are bugs, are spawn, and are called “the mass” and “the herd.” In a century, in a millennium, one or two men; that is to say,—one or two approximations to the right state of every man. All the rest behold in the hero or the poet their own green and crude being,—ripened; yes, and are content to be less, so *that* may attain to its full stature. What a testimony,—full of grandeur, full of pity, is borne to the demands of his own nature, by the poor clansman, the poor partisan, who rejoices in the glory of his chief. The poor and the low find some amends to their immense moral capacity, for their

2. The source is obscure, perhaps proverbial, since the same aphorism appears in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (Part II, Chapter 31). There it is a boorish jest, not an epigram as here, and the character is not named Macdonald.

3. Sir Humphry Davy (1778–1829), English chemist, pioneer in electrolysis; Baron Georges Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert Cuvier (1769–1832), French naturalist, founder of comparative anatomy and paleontology.

acquiescence in a political and social inferiority. They are content to be brushed like flies from the path of a great person, so that justice shall be done by him to that common nature which it is the dearest desire of all to see enlarged and glorified. They sun themselves in the great man's light, and feel it to be their own element. They cast the dignity of man from their downtrodden selves upon the shoulders of a hero, and will perish to add one drop of blood to make that great heart beat, those giant sinews combat and conquer. He lives for us, and we live in him.

Men such as they are, very naturally seek money or power; and power because it is as good as money,—the "spoils," so called, "of office." And why not? For they aspire to the highest, and this, in their sleep-walking, they dream is highest. Wake them, and they shall quit the false good, and leap to the true, and leave governments to clerks and desks. This revolution is to be wrought by the gradual domestication of the idea of Culture. The main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the upbuilding of a man. Here are the materials strown along the ground. The private life of one man shall be a more illustrious monarchy,—more formidable to its enemy, more sweet and serene in its influence to its friend, than any kingdom in history. For a man, rightly viewed, comprehendeth the particular natures of all men. Each philosopher, each bard, each actor has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself. The books which once we valued more than the apple of the eye, we have quite exhausted. What is that but saying, that we have come up with the point of view which the universal mind took through the eyes of one scribe; we have been that man, and have passed on. First, one; then, another; we drain all cisterns, and, waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person, who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily; and, now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men.

But I have dwelt perhaps tediously upon this abstraction of the Scholar. I ought not to delay longer to add what I have to say, of nearer reference to the time and to this country.

Historically, there is thought to be a difference in the ideas which predominate over successive epochs, and there are data for marking the genius of the Classic, of the Romantic, and now of the Reflective or Philosophical age. With the views I have intimated of the oneness or the identity of the mind through all individuals, I do

not much dwell on these differences. In fact, I believe each individual passes through all three. The boy is a Greek; the youth, romantic; the adult, reflective. I deny not, however, that a revolution in the leading idea may be distinctly enough traced.

Our age is bewailed as the age of Introversion. Must that needs be evil? We, it seems, are critical; we are embarrassed with second thoughts; we cannot enjoy any thing for hankering to know whereof the pleasure consists; we are lined with eyes; we see with our feet; the time is infected with Hamlet's unhappiness, —

“Sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought.”<sup>4</sup>

It is so bad then? Sight is the last thing to be pitied. Would we be blind? Do we fear lest we should outsee nature and God, and drink truth dry? I look upon the discontent of the literary class, as a mere announcement of the fact, that they find themselves not in the state of mind of their fathers, and regret the coming state as untried; as a boy dreads the water before he has learned that he can swim. If there is any period one would desire to be born in,—is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side, and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old, can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

I read with some joy of the auspicious signs of the coming days, as they glimmer already through poetry and art, through philosophy and science, through church and state.

One of these signs is the fact, that the same movement which effected the elevation of what was called the lowest class in the state, assumed in literature a very marked and as benign an aspect. Instead of the sublime and beautiful, the near, the low, the common was explored and poetized. That, which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign—is it not? of new vigor when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and the feet. I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy;<sup>5</sup> I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds. What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in

4. *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene i, l. 85.

5. Provence, ancient province in south-east France, was the cultural center of the troubadours, traveling minstrels (fl. 1200–1400).

the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body;—show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature; let me see every trifle bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law; and the shop, the plough, and the ledger, referred to the like cause by which light undulates and poets sing;—and the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order; there is no trifle; there is no puzzle; but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench.

This idea has inspired the genius of Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, and, in a newer time, of Goethe,<sup>6</sup> Wordsworth, and Carlyle. This idea they have differently followed and with various success. In contrast with their writing, the style of Pope, of Johnson, of Gibbon, looks cold and pedantic. This writing is bloodwarm. Man is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote. The near explains the far. The drop is a small ocean. A man is related to all nature. This perception of the worth of the vulgar is fruitful in discoveries. Goethe, in this very thing the most modern of the moderns, has shown us, as none ever did, the genius of the ancients.

There is one man of genius, who has done much for this philosophy of life, whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated;—I mean Emanuel Swedenborg. The most imaginative of men, yet writing with the precision of a mathematician, he endeavored to engraft a purely philosophical Ethics on the popular Christianity of his time. Such an attempt, of course, must have difficulty, which no genius could surmount. But he saw and showed the connection between nature and the affections of the soul. He pierced the emblematic or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world. Especially did his shade-loving muse hover over and interpret the lower parts of nature; he showed the mysterious bond that allies moral evil to the foul material forms, and has given in epical parables a theory of insanity, of beasts, of unclean and fearful things.

Another sign of our times, also marked by an analogous political movement, is the new importance given to the single person. Every thing that tends to insulate the individual,—to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state;—tends to true union as well as greatness. "I learned," said the melancholy Pestalozzi,<sup>7</sup> "that no man in God's wide earth is

6. Emerson used Goethe as his archetype for "The Writer" in *Representative Men*.

7. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827), Swiss educator, "melancholy" at

the apparent failure of his theories, had a posthumous triumph. Bronson Alcott introduced his methods, hence Emerson's interest.

either willing or able to help any other man." Help must come from the bosom alone. The scholar is that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an university of knowledges. If there be one lesson more than another, which should pierce his ear, it is, The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all. Mr. President and Gentlemen, this confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar. We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, complaisant. See already the tragic consequence. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. There is no work for any but the decorous and the complaisant. Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these,—but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire, and turn drudges, or die of disgust,—some of them suicides. What is the remedy? They did not yet see, and thousands of young men as hopeful now crowding to the barriers for the career, do not yet see, that, if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience,—patience;—with the shades of all the good and great for company; and for solace, the perspective of your own infinite life; and for work, the study and the communication of principles, the making those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world. Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit;—not to be reckoned one character;—not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers and friends,—please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. The study of letters shall be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence. The dread of man and the love of man shall be a wall of defence and a wreath of joy around all. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.



Self-Reliance<sup>9</sup>

"Ne te quæsieris extra." <sup>1</sup>

"Man is his own star; and the soul that can  
Render an honest and a perfect man  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;  
Nothing to him falls early or too late.  
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."

- EPILOGUE TO BEAUMONT AND  
FLETCHER'S HONEST MAN'S FORTUNE

Cast the bantling on the rocks,  
Suckle him with the she-wolf's teat,  
Wintered with the hawk and fox,  
Power and speed be hands and feet.

I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter<sup>2</sup> which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they instil is of more value than any thought they may contain. To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost,—and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflex-

9. "Self-Reliance" is generally regarded as indispensable for the clear understanding of Emerson's matured philosophy of individualism. This individualism functions through the relations of the "self" with God, or the "Over-Soul"—which is another name for the moral law inherent in nature. But these relations are not automatic; the individual is accorded the responsibility of freedom of choice, guided by intuition and experience. Apart from its ideas, "Self-Reliance" is regarded by many as the high tide of Emerson's prose; it is compact and cogent in its logic, and its style is a perfect instrument for its emotional intensity and its wit. The ideas of this essay took shape over a long period. It contains a passage from a journal entry of 1832, and others from various lec-

tures delivered between 1836 and 1839 (Centenary Edition, Vol. II, pp. 389-390). It was first published in *Essays* [First Series] (1841), which Emerson revised for the edition of 1847, on which the present text is based.

1. "Do not seek [answers] outside yourself." The first edition of "Self-Reliance" bore all three epigraphs as printed here. Emerson composed the quatrain himself, and dropped it from the second edition (1847). It was restored by later editors of the essay and also appears in the *Poems* as "Power."

2. The painter-poet may be the American Washington Allston (1779-1843), or the English William Blake (1757-1827), according to E. W. Emerson (Centenary Edition, Vol. II, p. 390).

ibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without preëstablished harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.<sup>3</sup>

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text, in the face and behaviour of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces, we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody: all conform to it, so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it. So God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and

3. Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I, l. 543.

charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold, then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary.

The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature. A boy is in the parlour what the pit<sup>4</sup> is in the playhouse; independent, irresponsible, looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass by, he tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary ways of boys, as good, bad, interesting, silly, eloquent, troublesome. He cumbers himself never about consequences, about interests: he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him: he does not court you. But the man is, as it were, clapped into jail by his consciousness. As soon as he has once acted or spoken with éclat, he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account. There is no Lethe<sup>5</sup> for this. Ah, that he could pass again into his neutrality! Who can thus avoid all pledges, and having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, unbiassed, unbribable, unaffrighted innocence, must always be formidable. He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being seen to be not private, but necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men, and put them in fear.

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make to a valued adviser, who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within? my friend suggested,—“But these impulses may be from below, not from above.” I replied, “They do not

4. In old theaters, the cheaper seats behind the orchestra, below the level of the stage.

5. In Greek myth, a river of forgetfulness in the nether world.

seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil." No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions. Every decent and well-spoken individual affects and sways me more than is right. I ought to go upright and vital, and speak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass? If an angry bigot assumes this bountiful cause of Abolition, and comes to me with his last news from Barbadoes,<sup>6</sup> why should I not say to him, "Go love thy infant; love thy wood-chopper; be good-natured and modest: have that grace; and never varnish your hard, uncharitable ambition with this incredible tenderness for black folk a thousand miles off. Thy love afar is spite at home." Rough and graceless would be such greeting, but truth is handsomer than the affectation of love. Your goodness must have some edge to it,—else it is none. The doctrine of hatred must be preached as the counteraction of the doctrine of love when that pules and whines. I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me.<sup>7</sup> I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim*.<sup>8</sup> I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation. Expect me not to show cause why I seek or why I exclude company. Then, again, do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison, if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots; and the thousandfold Relief Societies;—though I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar, which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold.

Virtues are, in the popular estimate, rather the exception than the rule. There is the man *and* his virtues. Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily nonappearance on parade. Their

6. British legislation abolished slavery in the West Indies, including Barbadoes, in 1833.

7. Cf. Matthew x: 34–37.

8. Cf. Exodus xii: 17. In Hebrew and other Eastern cultures, a mark on the lintel or doorframe characterized the resident. Emerson's "Whim" signifies individualism, not capriciousness.

works are done as an apology or extenuation of their living in the world,—as invalids and the insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances. I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle. I much prefer that it should be of a lower strain, so it be genuine and equal, than that it should be glittering and unsteady. I wish it to be sound and sweet, and not to need diet and bleeding. I ask primary evidence that you are a man, and refuse this appeal from the man to his actions. I know that for myself it makes no difference whether I do or forbear those actions which are reckoned excellent. I cannot consent to pay for a privilege where I have intrinsic right. Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony.

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is, that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character. If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead Bible-society, vote with a great party either for the government or against it, spread your table like base housekeepers,—under all these screens I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are. And, of course, so much force is withdrawn from all your proper life. But do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work, and you shall reinforce yourself. A man must consider what a blind man's-buff is this game of conformity. If I know your sect, I anticipate your argument. I hear a preacher announce for his text and topic the expediency of one of the institutions of his church. Do I not know beforehand that not possibly can he say a new and spontaneous word? Do I not know that, with all this ostentation of examining the grounds of the institution, he will do no such thing? Do I not know that he is pledged to himself not to look but at one side,—the permitted side, not as a man, but as a parish minister? He is a retained attorney, and these airs of the bench are the emptiest affectation. Well, most men have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief, and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion. This conformity makes them not false in a few particulars, authors of a few lies, but false in all particulars. Their every truth is not quite true. Their two is not the real two, their four not the real four; so that every word they say chagrins us, and

we know not where to begin to set them right. Meantime nature is not slow to equip us in the prison-uniform of the party to which we adhere. We come to wear one cut of face and figure, and acquire by degrees the gentlest asinine expression. There is a mortifying experience in particular, which does not fail to wreak itself also in the general history; I mean "the foolish face of praise,"<sup>9</sup> the forced smile which we put on in company where we do not feel at ease in answer to conversation which does not interest us. The muscles, not spontaneously moved, but moved by a low usurping wilfulness, grow tight about the outline of the face, with the most disagreeable sensation.

For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The bystanders look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlour. If this aversion had its origin in contempt and resistance like his own, he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a newspaper directs. Yet is the discontent of the multitude more formidable than that of the senate and the college. It is easy enough for a firm man who knows the world to brook the rage of the cultivated classes. Their rage is decorous and prudent, for they are timid as being very vulnerable themselves. But when to their feminine rage the indignation of the people is added, when the ignorant and the poor are aroused, when the unintelligent brute force that lies at the bottom of society is made to growl and mow,<sup>1</sup> it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion to treat it godlike as a trifle of no concernment.

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them.

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity: yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat in the hand of the harlot,<sup>2</sup> and flee.

9. Cf. Alexander Pope, "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," l. 212.

1. To mock or grimace.

2. Cf. Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Genesis xxxix: 12.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day.—“Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.”—Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo,<sup>3</sup> and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza;<sup>4</sup>—read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing, contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not, and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in their hour. For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future. If I can be firm enough to-day to do right, and scorn eyes, I must have done so much right before as to defend me now. Be it how it will,

3. Pythagoras, Greek thinker of the fifth century B.C., aroused controversy by his revolutionary ideas and mathematical discoveries; Copernicus (1473–1543) risked charges of impiety in promulgating the theory of the solar system now accepted; Galileo (1564–1642) was tried by the Inquisition and

condemned to retirement for supporting the theories of Copernicus. The remainder of these names suggest familiar controversies.

4. An Alexandrian stanza is a palindromic, or an arrangement of words which read the same backward as forward.

do right now. Always scorn appearances, and you always may. The force of character is cumulative. All the foregone days of virtue work their health into this. What makes the majesty of the heroes of the senate and the field, which so fills the imagination? The consciousness of a train of great days and victories behind. They shed a united light on the advancing actor. He is attended as by a visible escort of angels. That is it which throws thunder into Chatham's<sup>5</sup> voice, and dignity into Washington's port, and America into Adams's<sup>6</sup> eye. Honor is venerable to us because it is no ephemera. It is always ancient virtue. We worship it to-day because it is not of to-day. We love it and pay it homage, because it is not a trap for our love and homage, but is self-dependent, self-derived, and therefore of an old immaculate pedigree, even if shown in a young person.

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted<sup>7</sup> and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife.<sup>8</sup> Let us never bow and apologize more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom, and trade, and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, and all men, and all events. Ordinarily, every body in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much, that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design;—and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Caesar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as, Monachism, of the Hermit Antony;<sup>9</sup> the Reformation, of Luther; Quakerism, of Fox;<sup>1</sup> Methodism, of Wesley;

5. The Earl of Chatham, William Pitt (1708–1778), greatest English orator of his day; he supported the American colonists in Parliament.

6. By 1841 there had been three Adamses to whom this reference might apply: Samuel, a leader of the Revolution; John, who became the second president; and John Quincy, the sixth president.

7. *I.e.*, "dismissed." The British official

"gazettes" announced dismissals, bankruptcies, and the like, as well as honors.

8. The strict discipline of the Spartans extended to musical instruments.

9. The hermitages of St. Anthony (ca. 250–350) were the beginnings of Christian monasticism.

1. George Fox (1624–1691) founded the Society of Friends in England (1647).



Abolition, of Clarkson.<sup>2</sup> Scipio, Milton called "the height of Rome;"<sup>3</sup> and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.

Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper, in the world which exists for him. But the man in the street, finding no worth in himself which corresponds to the force which built a tower or sculptured a marble god, feels poor when he looks on these. To him a palace, a statue, or a costly book have an alien and forbidding air, much like a gay equipage, and seem to say like that, "Who are you, Sir?" Yet they all are his, suitors for his notice, petitioners to his faculties that they will come out and take possession. The picture waits for my verdict: it is not to command me, but I am to settle its claims to praise. That popular fable<sup>4</sup> of the sot who was picked up dead drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its popularity to the fact, that it symbolizes so well the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot, but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason and finds himself a true prince.

Our reading is mendicant and sycophantic. In history, our imagination plays us false. Kingdom and lordship, power and estate, are a gaudier vocabulary than private John and Edward in a small house and common day's work; but the things of life are the same to both; the sum total of both is the same. Why all this deference to Alfred,<sup>5</sup> and Scanderbeg,<sup>6</sup> and Gustavus?<sup>7</sup> Suppose they were virtuous; did they wear out virtue? As great a stake depends on your private act to-day, as followed their public and renowned steps. When private men shall act with original views, the lustre will be transferred from the actions of kings to those of gentlemen.

The world has been instructed by its kings, who have so magnetized the eyes of nations. It has been taught by this colossal symbol the mutual reverence that is due from man to man. The joyful loyalty with which men have everywhere suffered the king, the noble, or the great proprietor to walk among them by a law of his own, make his own scale of men and things, and reverse theirs, pay for

2. Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) was the pioneer of the British antislavery movement.

3. Cf. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX, l. 510. Scipio Africanus "the Elder" (237-183 B.C.), conqueror of Hannibal, was the greatest Roman general before Julius Caesar.

4. Cf. the same story in Shakespeare's "Induction," *The Taming of the Shrew* (Centenary Edition, Vol. II, p. 392).

5. Alfred (849-899), called "the Great"

among Saxon kings of Britain.

6. Scanderbeg (Turkish title, "Iskander Bey") was George Castrioti (1403?-1468), national hero of the Albanians, whom he led against the Turks.

7. Sweden's King Gustavus I (Gustavus Vasa, 1496-1560) defeated the Danes, and proclaimed Christianity; Gustavus II (Gustavus Adolphus, 1594-1632) freed Swedish territories occupied by Denmark, Russia, and Poland.

benefits not with money but with honor, and represent the law in his person, was the hieroglyphic by which they obscurely signified their consciousness of their own right and comeliness, the right of every man.

The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust. Who is the Trustee? What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax,<sup>8</sup> without calculable elements, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which giveth man wisdom, and which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind, and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. My wilful actions and acquisitions are but roving;—the idlest reverie, the faintest native emotion, command my curiosity and respect. Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily; for they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing. But perception is not whimsical, but fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in course of time, all mankind,—although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception of it is as much a fact as the sun.

8. *I.e.*, "incalculable."

The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure, that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh he should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole. Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, old things pass away,—means, teachers, texts, temples fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hour. All things are made sacred by relation to it,—one as much as another. All things are dissolved to their centre by their cause, and, in the universal miracle, petty and particular miracles disappear. If, therefore, a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fulness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his ripened being? Whence, then, this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light; where it is, is day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury, if it be anything more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say "I think," "I am," but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. Before a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied, and it satisfies nature, in all moments alike. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

This should be plain enough. Yet see what strong intellects dare not yet hear God himself, unless he speaks the phraseology of I know not what David, or Jeremiah, or Paul. We shall not always set so great a price on a few texts, on a few lives. We are like children who repeat by rote the sentences of grandames and tutors, and, as they grow older, of the men of talents and character they chance to see,—painfully recollecting the exact words they spoke; afterwards, when they come into the point of view which those had who

uttered these sayings, they understand them, and are willing to let the words go; for, at any time, they can use words as good when occasion comes. If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong man to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak. When we have new perception, we shall gladly disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish. When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

And now at last the highest truth on this subject remains unsaid: probably cannot be said; for all that we say is the far-off remembering of the intuition. That thought, by what I can now nearest approach to say it, is this. When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way; you shall not discern the foot-prints of any other; you shall not see the face of man; you shall not hear any name;—the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience. You take the way from man, not to man. All persons that ever existed are its forgotten ministers. Fear and hope are alike beneath it. There is somewhat low even in hope. In the hour of vision, there is nothing that can be called gratitude, nor properly joy. The soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and calms itself with knowing that all things go well. Vast spaces of nature, the Atlantic Ocean, the South Sea,—long intervals of time, years, centuries,—are of no account. This which I think and feel underlay every former state of life and circumstances, as it does underlie my present, and what is called life, and what is called death.

Life only avails, not the having lived. Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates, that the soul *becomes*; for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to a shame, confounds the saint with the rogue, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. Why, then, do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present, there will be power not confident but agent. To talk of reliance is a poor external way of speaking. Speak rather of that which relies, because it works and is. Who has more obedience than I masters me, though he should not raise his finger. Round him I must revolve by the gravitation of spirits. We fancy it rhetoric, when we speak of eminent virtue. We do not yet see that virtue is Height, and that a man or a company of men, plastic and permeable to principles, by the law of nature must overpower and ride all cities, nations, kings, rich men, poets, who are not.

This is the ultimate fact which we so quickly reach on this, as on

every topic, the resolution of all into the ever-blessed ONE. Self-existence is the attribute of the Supreme Cause, and it constitutes the measure of good by the degree in which it enters into all lower forms. All things real are so by so much virtue as they contain. Commerce, husbandry, hunting, whaling, war, eloquence, personal weight, are somewhat, and engage my respect as examples of its presence and impure action. I see the same law working in nature for conservation and growth. Power is in nature the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself. The genesis and maturation of a planet, its poise and orbit, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are demonstrations of the self-sufficing, and therefore self-relying soul.

Thus all concentrates: let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause. Let us stun and astonish the intruding rabble of men and books and institutions, by a simple declaration of the divine fact. Bid the invaders take the shoes from off their feet, for God is here within.<sup>9</sup> Let our simplicity judge them, and our docility to our own law demonstrate the poverty of nature and fortune beside our native riches.

But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men. We must go alone. I like the silent church before the service begins, better than any preaching. How far off, how cool, how chaste the persons look, begirt each one with a precinct or sanctuary! So let us always sit. Why should we assume the faults of our friends, or wife, or father, or child, because they sit around our hearth, or are said to have the same blood? All men have my blood, and I all men's. Not for that will I adopt their petulance or folly, even to the extent of being ashamed of it. But your isolation must not be mechanical, but spiritual, that is, must be elevation. At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles. Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy closet door, and say,—“Come out unto us.” But keep thy state; come not into their confusion. The power men possess to annoy me, I give them by a weak curiosity. No man can come near me but through my act. “What we love that we have, but by desire we bereave ourselves of the love.”

If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith, let us at least resist our temptations; let us enter into the state of war, and wake Thor<sup>1</sup> and Woden,<sup>2</sup> courage and constancy, in our

9. Cf. Joshua v: 15; Exodus iii: 5.

1. In Norse myth, “the Thunderer,” god of war.

2. Anglo-Saxon form of the name of Odin—in Teutonic myth the god of war but also the patron of the slain.

Saxon breasts. This is to be done in our smooth times by speaking the truth. Check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, "O Father, O mother, O wife, O Brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavor to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife,—but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and moon whatever inly rejoices me, and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and if we follow the truth, it will bring us out safe at last."—But so you may give these friends pain. Yes, but I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moments of reason, when they look out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me, and do the same thing.

The populace think that your rejection of popular standards is a rejection of all standard, and mere antinomianism;<sup>3</sup> and the bold sensualist will use the name of philosophy to gild his crimes. But the law of consciousness abides. There are two confessionals, in one or the other of which we must be shriven. You may fulfil your round of duties by clearing yourself in the *direct*, or in the *reflex* way. Consider whether you have satisfied your relations to father, mother, cousin, neighbour, town, cat and dog; whether any of these can upbraid you. But I may also neglect this reflex standard, and absolve me to myself. I have my own stern claims and perfect circle. It denies the name of duty to many offices that are called duties. But if I can discharge its debts, it enables me to dispense with the popular code. If any one imagines that this law is lax, let him keep its commandment one day.

3. The doctrine of salvation by faith alone, without reference to breaches of the moral law.

And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity, and has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster. High be his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be to him as strong as iron necessity is to others!

If any man consider the present aspects of what is called by distinction *society*, he will see the need of these ethics. The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding whimperers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of each other. Our age yields no great and perfect persons. We want men and women who shall renovate life and our social state, but we see that most natures are insolvent, cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of all proportion to their practical force and do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion, we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlour soldiers. We shun the rugged battle of fate, where strength is born.

If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises, they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is *ruined*. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges, and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened, and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it, peddles*, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always, like a cat, falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days, and feels no shame in not "studying a profession," for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances. Let a Stoic<sup>4</sup> open the resources of man, and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear; that a man is the word made flesh,<sup>5</sup> born to shed healing to the nations, that he should be ashamed of our compassion, and that the moment he acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries, and customs out of the window, we pity him no more, but thank and revere him,—and that teacher shall restore the life of man to splendor, and make his name dear to all history.

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution

4. The original Stoics, led by Zeno of Athens after 300 B.C., taught passionless

self-reliance and submission to natural law.

5. Cf. John i: 14.

in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.

1. In what prayers do men allow themselves! That which they call a holy office is not so much as brave and manly. Prayer looks abroad and asks for some foreign addition to come through some foreign virtue, and loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural, and mediatorial and miraculous. Prayer that craves a particular commodity,—anything less than all good,—is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good.<sup>6</sup> But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends. Caratach, in Fletcher's *Bonduca*,<sup>7</sup> when admonished to inquire the mind of the god Audate, replies,—

"His hidden meaning lies in our endeavours;  
Our valors are our best gods."

Another sort of false prayers are our regrets. Discontent is the want of self-reliance: it is infirmity of will. Regret calamities, if you can thereby help the sufferer; if not, attend your own work, and already the evil begins to be repaired. Our sympathy is just as base. We come to them who weep foolishly, and sit down and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough electric shocks, putting them once more in communication with their own reason. The secret of fortune is joy in our hands. Welcome evermore to gods and men is the self-helping man. For him all doors are flung wide: him all tongues greet, all honors crown, all eyes follow with desire. Our love goes out to him and embraces him, because he did not need it. We solicitously and apologetically caress and celebrate him, because he held on his way and scorned our disapprobation. The gods love him because men hated him. "To the persevering mortal," said Zoroaster,<sup>8</sup> "the blessed Immortals are swift."

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect. They say with those foolish Israelites, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die. Speak thou, speak any man with us, and we will obey."<sup>9</sup> Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in

6. Cf. Genesis i: 25.

7. The Elizabethan playwright John Fletcher wrote *Bonduca* (1618) perhaps in collaboration with Francis Beaumont.

8. Reputed founder (sixth century

B.C.?) of ancient Persian religion, recorded in the Avesta, here quoted.

9. Cf. the words of the Israelites to Moses concerning the Ten Commandments: Exodus xx: 19.



my brother, because he has shut his own temple doors, and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God. Every new mind is a new classification.<sup>1</sup> If it prove a mind of uncommon activity and power, a Locke, a Lavoisier, a Hutton, a Bentham, a Fourier, it imposes its classification on other men, and lo! a new system. In proportion to the depth of the thought, and so to the number of the objects it touches and brings within reach of the pupil, is his complacency. But chiefly is this apparent in creeds and churches, which are also classifications of some powerful mind acting on the elemental thought of duty, and man's relation to the Highest. Such is Calvinism, Quakerism, Swedenborgism. The pupil takes the same delight in subordinating every thing to the new terminology, as a girl who has just learned botany in seeing a new earth and new seasons thereby. It will happen for a time, that the pupil will find his intellectual power has grown by the study of his master's mind. But in all unbalanced minds, the classification is idolized, passes for the end, and not for a speedily exhaustible means, so that the walls of the system blend to their eye in the remote horizon with the walls of the universe; the luminaries of heaven seem to them hung on the arch their master built. They cannot imagine how you aliens have any right to see,—how you can see; "It must be somehow that you stole the light from us." They do not yet perceive that light, unsystematic, indomitable, will break into any cabin, even into theirs. Let them chirp awhile and call it their own. If they are honest and do well, presently their neat new pinfold will be too strait and low, will crack, will lean, will rot and vanish, and the immortal light, all young, and joyful, million-orbed, million-colored, will beam over the universe as on the first morning.

2. It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Travelling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In many hours, we feel that duty is our place. The soul is no traveller; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still, and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance, that he goes the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits cities and men like a sovereign, and not like an interloper or a valet.

I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe, for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence, so that the man

1. Each of the following was a pioneer of the "systematic" science: John Locke (1632-1704) developed a theory of knowledge; Antoine Laurent Lavoisier (1743-1794) pioneered in chemistry and James Hutton (1726-1797) in

geology; Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) formulated utilitarian concepts of law and government; François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837) originated plans for the co-operative organization of society.

is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused, or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes, in Palmyra, his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins.

Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican, and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go.

3. But the rage of travelling is a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellectual action. The intellect is vagabond, and our system of education fosters restlessness. Our minds travel when our bodies are forced to stay at home. We imitate; and what is imitation but the travelling of the mind? Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions, our tastes, our faculties, lean, and follow the Past and the Distant. The soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. And why need we copy the Doric or the Gothic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought, and quaint expression are as near to us as to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakspeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is a unique. The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow.<sup>2</sup> Shakspeare will never be made by the study of Shakspeare. Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too

2. The essay "Self-Reliance" originated as a development of the preceding portion of this paragraph, which formed an

entry in Emerson's journal for 1832 (cf. Centenary Edition, Vol. II, p. 395).

much. There is at this moment for you an utterance brave and grand as that of the colossal chisel of Phidias,<sup>3</sup> or trowel of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses, or Dante, but different from all these. Not possibly will the soul, all rich, all eloquent, with thousand-cloven tongue, deign to repeat itself but if you can hear what these patriarchs say, surely you can reply to them in the same pitch of voice; for the ear and the tongue are two organs of one nature. Abide in the simple and noble regions of thy life, obey thy heart, and thou shall reproduce the Foreworld again.

4. As our Religion, our Education, our Art look abroad, so does our spirit of society. All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given, something is taken. Society acquires new arts, and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil, and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat, and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under! But compare the health of the two men, and you shall see that the white man has lost his aboriginal strength. If the traveller tell us truly, strike the savage with a broad-axe and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave.

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His note-books impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance-office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity, entrenched in establishments and forms, some vigor of wild virtue. For every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?

There is no more deviation in the moral standard than in the standard of height or bulk. No greater men are now than ever were. A singular equality may be observed between the great men of the first and of the last ages; nor can all the science, art, religion, and

3. The greatest of ancient Greek sculptors (*fl.* fifth century B.C.).

philosophy of the nineteenth century avail to educate greater men than Plutarch's<sup>4</sup> heroes, three or four and twenty centuries ago. Not in time is the race progressive. Phocion, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Diogenes, are great men, but they leave no class. He who is really of their class will not be called by their name, but will be his own man, and in his turn the founder of a sect. The arts and inventions of each period are only its costume, and do not invigorate men. The harm of the improved machinery may compensate its good. Hudson and Behring accomplished so much in their fishing-boats, as to astonish Parry and Franklin,<sup>5</sup> whose equipment exhausted the resources of science and art. Galileo, with an opera-glass,<sup>6</sup> discovered a more splendid series of celestial phenomena than any one since. Columbus found the New World in an undecked boat. It is curious to see the periodical disuse and perishing of means and machinery, which were introduced with loud laudation a few years or centuries before. The great genius returns to essential man. We reckoned the improvements of the art of war among the triumphs of science, and yet Napoleon conquered Europe by the bivouac, which consisted of falling back on naked valor, and disencumbering it of all aids. The Emperor held it impossible to make a perfect army, says Las Casas,<sup>7</sup> "without abolishing our arms, magazines, commissaries, and carriages, until, in imitation of the Roman custom, the soldier should receive his supply of corn, grind it in his hand-mill, and bake his bread himself."

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience dies with them.

And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature.

4. Graeco-Roman biographer (46?-120?), whose *Lives* became a source book for Renaissance literature, especially the Elizabethan.

5. The earlier explorers, Henry Hudson (died 1611) and Vitus Bering (Behring) (1680-1741), left their names on the map of North America; Sir William E. Parry (1790-1855) and Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) were English Arctic explorers famous in Emerson's day.

6. The "opera-glass" of Galileo (1564-1642), Italian astronomer, was the first modern refracting telescope.

7. Properly Las Cases (Comte Emmanuel Augustin Dieudonné de, 1766-1842), Napoleon's secretary during his exile on St. Helena, who compiled from the Emperor's conversations the *Mémoires de Sainte Hélène* (1818, revised 1823) which Emerson here paraphrases.

Especially he hates what he has, if he sees that it is accidental,—came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having, it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and merely lies there, because no revolution or no robber takes it away. But that which a man is, does always by necessity acquire, and what the man acquires is living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man breathes. “Thy lot or portion of life,” said the Caliph Ali,<sup>8</sup> “is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it.” Our dependence on these foreign goods leads us to our slavish respect for numbers. The political parties meet in numerous conventions; the greater the concourse, and with each new uproar of announcement, The delegation from Essex! The Democrats from New Hampshire! The Whigs of Maine! the young patriot feels himself stronger than before by a new thousand of eyes and arms. In like manner the reformers summon conventions, and vote and resolve in multitude. Not so, O friends! will the God deign to enter and inhabit you, but by a method precisely the reverse. It is only as a man puts off all foreign support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man better than a town? Ask nothing of men, and, in the endless mutation, thou only firm column must presently appear the upholder of all that surrounds thee. He who knows that power is inborn, that he is weak because he has looked for good out of him and elsewhere, and so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly on his thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles; just as a man who stands on his feet is stronger than a man who stands on his head.

So use all that is called Fortune. Most men gamble with her, and gain all, and lose all, as her wheel rolls.<sup>9</sup> But do thou leave as unlawful these winnings, and deal with Cause and Effect, the chancellors of God. In the Will work and acquire, and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance, and shalt sit hereafter out of fear from her rotations. A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick, or the return of your absent friend, or some other favorable event, raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

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8. Ali ibn-abu-Talib (600?–661), the fourth Moslem Caliph and son-in-law of the Prophet; his reputed sayings, surviving as proverbs, had appeared in English translation (1832).

9. The ancients sometimes pictured Fortune as dispensing her gifts at the whim of a wheel of chance.

The Over-Soul<sup>1</sup>

"But souls that of his own good life partake,  
 He loves as his own self; dear as his eye  
 They are to Him: He'll never them forsake:  
 When they shall die, then God himself shall die:  
 They live, they live in blest eternity."

- HENRY MORE <sup>2</sup>

Space is ample, east and west,  
 But two cannot go abreast,  
 Cannot travel in it two:  
 Yonder masterful cuckoo  
 Crowds every egg out of the nest,  
 Quick or dead, except its own;  
 A spell is laid on sod and stone,  
 Night and Day've been tampered with,  
 Every quality and pith  
 Surcharged and sultry with a power  
 That works its will on age and hour.

There is a difference between one and another hour of life, in their authority and subsequent effect. Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences. For this reason, the argument which is always forthcoming to silence those who conceive extraordinary hopes of man, namely, the appeal to experience, is forever invalid and vain. We give up the past to the objector, and yet we hope. He must explain this hope. We grant that human life is mean; but how did we find out that it was mean? What is the ground of this uneasiness of ours; of this old discontent? What is the universal sense of want and ignorance, but the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim? Why do men feel that the natural history of man has never been written, but he is always leaving behind what you have said of him, and it becomes old, and books of metaphysics worthless? The philosophy of six thousand years has not searched the chambers and magazines of the soul. In its experiments there has always remained, in the last analysis, a residuum it could not resolve. Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence. The most exact calculator has no prescience that somewhat incalculable may not balk the very next moment. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine.

As with events, so is it with thoughts. When I watch that flowing

1. As "Self-Reliance" broadens the social concepts which Emerson first suggested in "The American Scholar," so "The Over-Soul" intensifies the spiritual idealism of the earlier essay *Nature*. In this sense it is Emerson's most "transcendental" pronouncement. It has also been his most controversial, ever since its first appearance in *Essays* [First Series] (1841). Yet many readers who cannot accept its extreme idealism or

its theological implications have found delight in the art of its expression. The present text is based on Emerson's last revision, for the edition of 1847. The second epigraph, Emerson's own composition, was added in the 1847 edition and retained by later editors.

2. English Cambridge Platonist; from his *Psychozoia Platonica* (1642), Canto II, l. 19.

river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, I see that I am a pensioner; not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water; that I desire and look up and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come.

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart, of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character, and not from his tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand, and become wisdom, and virtue, and power, and beauty. We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul. Only by the vision of that Wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith. Every man's words, who speaks from that life, must sound vain to those who do not dwell in the same thought on their own part. I dare not speak for it. My words do not carry its august sense; they fall short and cold. Only itself can inspire whom it will, and behold! their speech shall be lyrical, and sweet, and universal as the rising of the wind. Yet I desire, even by profane words, if I may not use sacred, to indicate the heaven of this deity, and to report what hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and energy of the Highest Law.

If we consider what happens in conversation, in reveries, in remorse, in times of passion, in surprises, in the instructions of dreams, wherein often we see ourselves in masquerade,—the droll disguises only magnifying and enhancing a real element, and forcing it on our distant notice,—we shall catch many hints that will broaden and lighten into knowledge of the secret of nature. All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty,

but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie,—an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. A man is the façade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love. And the blindness of the intellect begins, when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us; in other words, to engage us to obey.

Of this pure nature every man is at some time sensible. Language cannot paint it with his colors. It is too subtile. It is undefinable, unmeasurable, but we know that it pervades and contains us. We know that all spiritual being is in man. A wise old proverb says, "God comes to see us without bell";<sup>3</sup> that is, as there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so is there no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. The walls are taken away. We lie open on one side to the deeps of spiritual nature, to the attributes of God. Justice we see and know, Love, Freedom, Power. These natures no man ever got above, but they tower over us, and most in the moment when our interests tempt us to wound them.

The sovereignty of this nature whereof we speak is made known by its independency of those limitations which circumscribe us on every hand. The soul circumscribes all things. As I have said, it contradicts all experience. In like manner it abolishes time and space. The influence of the senses has, in most men, overpowered the mind to that degree, that the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable; and to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world, the sign of insanity. Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. The spirit sports with time,—

"Can crowd eternity into an hour,  
Or stretch an hour to eternity."<sup>4</sup>

We are often made to feel that there is another youth and age than that which is measured from the year of our natural birth. Some

3. Among the "Spanish proverbs" listed in Emerson's *Journals*, Vol. II, p. 480 (noted in the Centenary Edition, Vol. II, p. 429).

4. From the poem "Auguries of Innocence," by William Blake (1757-1827).



thoughts always find us young, and keep us so. Such a thought is the love of the universal and eternal beauty. Every man parts from that contemplation with the feeling that it rather belongs to ages than to mortal life. The least activity of the intellectual powers redeems us in a degree from the conditions of time. In sickness, in languor, give us a strain of poetry, or a profound sentence, and we are refreshed; or produce a volume of Plato, or Shakspeare, or remind us of their names, and instantly we come into a feeling of longevity. See how the deep divine thought reduces centuries, and millenniums, and makes itself present through all ages. Is the teaching of Christ less effective now than it was when first his mouth was opened? The emphasis of facts and persons in my thought has nothing to do with time. And so, always, the soul's scale is one; the scale of the senses and the understanding is another. Before the revelations of the soul, Time, Space, and Nature shrink away. In common speech, we refer all things to time, as we habitually refer the immensely sundered stars to one concave sphere. And so we say that the Judgment is distant or near, that the Millennium approaches,<sup>5</sup> that a day of certain political, moral, social reforms is at hand, and the like, when we mean, that, in the nature of things, one of the facts we contemplate is external and fugitive, and the other is permanent and connate with the soul. The things we now esteem fixed shall, one by one, detach themselves, like ripe fruit, from our experience, and fall. The wind shall blow them none knows whither.<sup>6</sup> The landscape, the figures, Boston, London, are facts as fugitive as any institution past, or any whiff of mist or smoke, and so is society, and so is the world. The soul looketh steadily forwards, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her. She has no dates, nor rites, nor persons, nor specialties, nor men. The soul knows only the soul; the web of events is the flowing robe in which she is clothed.

After its own law and not by arithmetic is the rate of its progress to be computed. The soul's advances are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line; but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis,—from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly. The growths of genius are of a certain *total* character, that does not advance the elect individual first over John, then Adam, then Richard, and give to each the pain of discovered inferiority, but by every throe of growth the man expands there where he works, passing, at each pulsation, classes, populations, of men. With each divine impulse the mind rends the thin rinds of the visible and finite, and comes out into eternity, and inspires and expires its air. It converses with truths that have always been spoken in the world, and becomes conscious of a

5. William Miller, founder of the Millerites, was then predicting the second

advent of Christ for 1843.  
6. Cf. John iii: 8.

closer sympathy with Zeno<sup>7</sup> and Arrian,<sup>8</sup> than with persons in the house.

This is the law of moral and of mental gain. The simple rise as by specific levity,<sup>9</sup> not into a particular virtue, but into the region of all the virtues. They are in the spirit which contains them all. The soul requires purity, but purity is not it; requires justice, but justice is not that; requires beneficence, but is somewhat better; so that there is a kind of descent and accommodation felt when we leave speaking of moral nature to urge a virtue which it enjoins. To the well-born child, all the virtues are natural, and not painfully acquired. Speak to his heart, and the man becomes suddenly virtuous.

Within the same sentiment is the germ of intellectual growth, which obeys the same law. Those who are capable of humility, of justice, of love, of aspiration, stand already on a platform that commands the sciences and arts, speech and poetry, action and grace. For whoso dwells in this moral beatitude already anticipates those special powers which men prize so highly. The lover has no talent, no skill, which passes for quite nothing with his enamored maiden, however little she may possess of related faculty; and the heart which abandons itself to the Supreme Mind finds itself related to all its works, and will travel a royal road to particular knowledges and powers. In ascending to this primary and aboriginal sentiment, we have come from our remote station on the circumference instantaneously to the centre of the world, where, as in the closet of God, we see causes, and anticipate the universe, which is but a slow effect.

One mode of the divine teaching is the incarnation of the spirit in a form,—in forms, like my own. I live in society; with persons who answer to thoughts in my own mind, or express a certain obedience to the great instincts to which I live. I see its presence to them. I am certified of a common nature; and these other souls, these separated selves, draw me as nothing else can. They stir in me the new emotions we call passion; of love, hatred, fear, admiration, pity; thence come conversation, competition, persuasion, cities, and war. Persons are supplementary to the primary teaching of the soul. In youth we are mad for persons. Childhood and youth see all the world in them. But the larger experience of man discovers the identical nature appearing through them all. Persons themselves acquaint us with the impersonal. In all conversation between two persons, tacit reference is made, as to a third party, to a common nature. That third party or common nature is not social; it is impersonal; is God. And so in groups where debate is earnest, and especially on high questions, the company become aware that the thought rises to an equal level

7. Founder of the Stoic philosophy.

8. Greek historian (died 180 A.D.), whose *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* are the source of our knowledge of the

philosophy of his teacher Epictetus, a Stoic.

9. *I.e.*, lightness by nature; a coinage contrasting with "specific gravity."

in all bosoms, that all have a spiritual property in what was said, as well as the sayer. They all become wiser than they were. It arches over them like a temple, this unity of thought in which every heart beats with nobler sense of power and duty, and thinks and acts with unusual solemnity. All are conscious of attaining to a higher self-possession. It shines for all. There is a certain wisdom of humanity which is common to the greatest men with the lowest, and which our ordinary education often labors to silence and obstruct. The mind is one, and the best minds, who love truth for its own sake, think much less of property in truth. They accept it thankfully everywhere, and do not label or stamp it with any man's name, for it is theirs long beforehand, and from eternity. The learned and the studious of thought have no monopoly of wisdom. Their violence of direction in some degree disqualifies them to think truly. We owe many valuable observations to people who are not very acute or profound, and who say the thing without effort, which we want and have long been hunting in vain. The action of the soul is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid, than in that which is said in any conversation. It broods over every society, and they unconsciously seek for it in each other. We know better than we do. We do not yet possess ourselves, and we know at the same time that we are much more. I feel the same truth how often in my trivial conversation with my neighbours, that somewhat higher in each of us overlooks this by-play, and Jove nods to Jove from behind each of us.

Men descend to meet. In their habitual and mean service to the world, for which they forsake their native nobleness, they resemble those Arabian sheiks, who dwell in mean houses, and affect an external poverty, to escape the rapacity of the Pacha,<sup>1</sup> and reserve all their display of wealth for their interior and guarded retirements.

As it is present in all persons, so it is in every period of life. It is adult already in the infant man. In my dealing with my child, my Latin and Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails. If I am wilful, he sets his will against mine, one for one, and leaves me, if I please, the degradation of beating him by my superiority of strength. But if I renounce my will, and act for the soul, setting that up as umpire between us two, out of his young eyes looks the same soul; he reveres and loves with me.

The soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth. We know truth when we see it, let skeptic and scoffer say what they choose. Foolish people ask you, when you have spoken what they do not wish to hear, "How do you know it is truth, and not an error of your own?" We know truth when we see it, from opinion, as we know when we are awake that we are awake. It was a grand sentence of Emanuel Swe-

1. The Turkish governor, who levied taxes upon these Arabs.

denborg,<sup>2</sup> which would alone indicate the greatness of that man's perception,—“It is no proof of a man's understanding to be able to affirm whatever he pleases; but to be able to discern that what is true is true, and that what is false is false, this is the mark and character of intelligence.” In the book I read, the good thought returns to me, as every truth will, the image of the whole soul. To the bad thought which I find in it, the same soul becomes a discerning, separating sword, and lops it away. We are wiser than we know. If we will not interfere with our thought, but will act entirely, or see how the thing stands in God, we know the particular thing, and every thing, and every man. For the Maker of all things and all persons stands behind us, and casts his dread omniscience through us over things.

But beyond this recognition of its own in particular passages of the individual's experience, it also reveals truth. And here we should seek to reinforce ourselves by its very presence, and to speak with a worthier, loftier strain of that advent. For the soul's communication of truth is the highest event in nature, since it then does not give somewhat from itself, but it gives itself, or passes into and becomes that man whom it enlightens; or, in proportion to that truth he receives, it takes him to itself.

We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term *Revelation*. These are always attended by the emotion of the sublime. For this communication is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the individual rivulet before the flowing surges of the sea of life. Every distinct apprehension of this central commandment agitates men with awe and delight. A thrill passes through all men at the reception of new truth, or at the performance of a great action, which comes out of the heart of nature. In these communications, the power to see is not separated from the will to do, but the insight proceeds from obedience, and the obedience proceeds from a joyful perception. Every moment when the individual feels himself invaded by it is memorable. By the necessity of our constitution, a certain enthusiasm attends the individual's consciousness of that divine presence. The character and duration of this enthusiasm varies with the state of the individual, from an ecstasy and trance and prophetic inspiration,—which is its rarer appearance,—to the faintest glow of virtuous emotion, in which form it warms, like our household fires, all the families and associations of men, and makes society possible. A certain tendency to insanity has always attended the opening of the religious sense in men, as if they had been “blasted with excess of light.”<sup>3</sup> The trances of Socrates, the “union” of Plotinus, the vision of Porphyry,<sup>4</sup> the con-

2. Swedish religious thinker who later became Emerson's example for “The Mystic” in *Representative Men*.

3. Thomas Gray (1716–1771), “The

Progress of Poesy,” III. ii, l. 7.

4. Plotinus (204?–270?), principal formulator of Neo-platonic philosophy, emphasized the soul's capacity for mys-

version of Paul,<sup>5</sup> the aurora of Behmen,<sup>6</sup> the convulsions of George Fox and his Quakers, the illumination of Swedenborg,<sup>7</sup> are of this kind. What was in the case of these remarkable persons a ravishment, has, in innumerable instances in common life, been exhibited in less striking manner. Everywhere the history of religion betrays a tendency to enthusiasm. The rapture of the Moravian and Quietist; the opening of the eternal sense of the Word, in the language of the New Jerusalem Church; the *revival* of the Calvinistic churches; the *experiences* of the Methodists, are varying forms of that shudder of awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul.

The nature of these revelations is the same; they are perceptions of the absolute law. They are solutions of the soul's own questions. They do not answer the questions which the understanding asks. The soul answers never by words, but by the thing itself that is inquired after.

Revelation is the disclosure of the soul. The popular notion of a revelation is, that it is a telling of fortunes. In past oracles of the soul, the understanding seeks to find answers to sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, what their hands shall do, and who shall be their company, adding names, and dates, and places. But we must pick no locks. We must check this low curiosity. An answer in words is delusive; it is really no answer to the questions you ask. Do not require a description of the countries towards which you sail. The description does not describe them to you, and to-morrow you arrive there, and know them by inhabiting them. Men ask concerning the immortality of the soul, the employments of heaven, the state of the sinner, and so forth. They even dream that Jesus has left replies to precisely these interrogatories. Never a moment did that sublime spirit speak in their *patois*.<sup>8</sup> To truth, justice, love, the attributes of the soul, the idea of immutableness is essentially associated. Jesus, living in these moral sentiments, heedless of sensual fortunes, heeding only the manifestations of these, never made the separation of the idea of duration from the essence of these attributes, nor uttered a syllable concerning the duration of the soul. It was left to his disciples to sever duration from the moral elements, and to teach the immortality of the soul as a doctrine, and maintain it by evidences. The moment the doctrine of the im-

tical "unification" with the Highest. Porphyry (233-304?), his visionary pupil, preserved Plotinus' teachings.

5. See Paul's miraculous conversion (Acts ix: 1-18).

6. Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), German theosophist, whose *Aurora, oder die Morgenröte im Aufgang*, was banned as heretical.

7. These mystics and their followers experienced trances, tremors, and illumina-

tions which Emerson compares with various manifestations later named. The Moravians, originally fifteenth-century Bohemian Hussites, were evangelical mystics; while the Quietists, Catholic dissenters in the seventeenth century, sought the mystical union by passive selflessness.

8. Literally "dialect"; here signifying limited communication.

mortality is separately taught, man is already fallen.<sup>9</sup> In the flowing of love, in the adoration of humility, there is no question of continuance. No inspired man ever asks this question, or condescends to these evidences. For the soul is true to itself, and the man in whom it is shed abroad cannot wander from the present, which is infinite, to a future which would be finite.

These questions which we lust to ask about the future are a confession of sin. God has no answer for them. No answer in words can reply to a question of things. It is not in an arbitrary "decree of God," but in the nature of man, that a veil shuts down on the facts of to-morrow; for the soul will not have us read any other cipher than that of cause and effect. By this veil, which curtains events, it instructs the children of men to live in to-day. The only mode of obtaining an answer to these questions of the senses is to forego all low curiosity, and, accepting the tide of being which floats us into the secret of nature, work and live, work and live, and all unawares the advancing soul has built and forged for itself a new condition, and the question and the answer are one.

By the same fire, vital, consecrating, celestial, which burns until it shall dissolve all things into the waves and surges of an ocean of light, we see and know each other, and what spirit each is of. Who can tell the grounds of his knowledge of the character of the several individuals in his circle of friends? No man. Yet their acts and words do not disappoint him. In that man, though he knew no ill of him, he put no trust. In that other, though they had seldom met, authentic signs had yet passed, to signify that he might be trusted as one who had an interest in his own character. We know each other very well,—which of us has been just to himself, and whether that which we teach or behold is only an aspiration, or is our honest effort also.

We are all discerners of spirits. That diagnosis lies aloft in our life or unconscious power. The intercourse of society,—its trade, its religion, its friendships, its quarrels,—is one wide, judicial investigation of character. In full court, or in small committee, or confronted face to face, accuser and accused, men offer themselves to be judged. Against their will they exhibit those decisive trifles by which character is read. But who judges? and what? Not our understanding. We do not read them by learning or craft. No; the wisdom of the wise man consists herein, that he does not judge them; he lets them judge themselves, and merely reads and records their own verdict.

By virtue of this inevitable nature, private will is overpowered, and, maugre our efforts or our imperfections, your genius will speak from you, and mine from me. That which we are, we shall teach, not voluntarily but involuntarily. Thoughts come into our minds by avenues which we never left open, and thoughts go out of our minds

9. Cf. the New England Puritan tradition of cleavage between the mortal

earth of "fallen man" and the heaven of the "saved."

through avenues which we never voluntarily opened. Character teaches over our head. The infallible index of true progress is found in the tone the man takes. Neither his age, nor his breeding, nor company, nor books, nor actions, nor talents, nor all together, can hinder him from being deferential to a higher spirit than his own. If he have not found his home in God, his manners, his forms of speech, the turn of his sentences, the build, shall I say, of all his opinions will involuntarily confess it, let him brave it out how he will. If he have found his centre, the Deity will shine through him, through all the disguises of ignorance, of ungenial temperament, of unfavorable circumstance. The tone of seeking is one, and the tone of having is another.

The great distinction between teachers sacred or literary,—between poets like Herbert, and poets like Pope,<sup>1</sup>—between philosophers like Spinoza, Kant, and Coleridge, and philosophers like Locke, Paley, Mackintosh, and Stewart,<sup>2</sup>—between men of the world who are reckoned accomplished talkers, and here and there a fervent mystic, prophesying, half insane under the infinitude of his thought,—is that one class speak *from within*, or from experience, as parties and possessors of the fact; and the other class, *from without*, as spectators merely, or perhaps as acquainted with the fact on the evidence of third persons. It is of no use to preach to me from without. I can do that too easily myself. Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others. In that is the miracle. I believe beforehand that it ought so to be. All men stand continually in the expectation of the appearance of such a teacher. But if a man do not speak from within the veil, where the word is one with that it tells of, let him lowly confess it.

The same Omniscience flows into the intellect, and makes what we call genius. Much of the wisdom of the world is not wisdom, and the most illuminated class of men are no doubt superior to literary fame, and are not writers. Among the multitude of scholars and authors, we feel no hallowing presence; we are sensible of a knack and skill rather than of inspiration; they have a light, and know not whence it comes, and call it their own; their talent is some exaggerated faculty, some overgrown member, so that their strength is a disease. In these instances the intellectual gifts do not make the impression of virtue, but almost of vice; and we feel that a man's talents stand in the way of his advancement in truth. But genius is religious.

1. George Herbert (1593–1633), whose poems of religious mysticism had recently been praised by Coleridge, is contrasted with Alexander Pope (1688–1744), whose satires were pointed with worldly sophistication.

2. Spinoza employed the Cartesian metaphysics to expound his pantheism; Kant was the German founder of idealism; Coleridge's writings had popularized transcendental concepts. These are con-

trasted with the empiricism of Locke; with the utilitarianism of William Paley (1743–1805), who in *Natural Theology* (1802) "proved" the existence of God by the argument from design in nature; with the rationalism of the contemporary historian Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832); and with the materialism of the "Common-Sense" Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart (1753–1828).

It is a larger imbibing of the common heart. It is not anomalous, but more like and not less like other men. There is, in all great poets, a wisdom of humanity which is superior to any talents they exercise. The author, the wit, the partisan, the fine gentleman, does not take place of the man. Humanity shines in Homer, in Chaucer, in Spenser, in Shakspeare, in Milton. They are content with truth. They use the positive degree. They seem frigid and phlegmatic to those who have been spiced with the frantic passion and violent coloring of inferior, but popular writers. For they are poets by the free course which they allow to the informing soul, which through their eyes beholds again, and blesses the things which it hath made. The soul is superior to its knowledge; wiser than any of its works. The great poet makes us feel our own wealth, and then we think less of his compositions. His best communication to our mind is to teach us to despise all he has done. Shakspeare carries us to such a lofty strain of intelligent activity, as to suggest a wealth which beggars his own; and we then feel that the splendid works which he has created, and which in other hours we extol as a sort of self-existent poetry, take no stronger hold of real nature than the shadow of a passing traveller on the rock. The inspiration which uttered itself in Hamlet and Lear could utter things as good from day to day for ever. Why, then, should I make account of Hamlet and Lear, as if we had not the soul from which they fell as syllables from the tongue?

This energy does not descend into individual life on any other condition than entire possession. It comes to the lowly and simple; it comes to whomsoever will put off what is foreign and proud; it comes as insight; it comes as serenity and grandeur. When we see those whom it inhabits, we are apprised of new degrees of greatness. From that inspiration the man comes back with a changed tone. He does not talk with men with an eye to their opinion. He tries them. It requires of us to be plain and true. The vain traveller attempts to embellish his life by quoting my lord, and the prince, and the countess, who thus said or did to *him*. The ambitious vulgar show you their spoons, and brooches, and rings, and preserve their cards and compliments. The more cultivated, in their account of their own experience, cull out the pleasing, poetic circumstance,—the visit to Rome, the man of genius they saw, the brilliant friend they know; still further on, perhaps, the gorgeous landscape, the mountain lights, the mountain thoughts, they enjoyed yesterday,—and so seek to throw a romantic color over their life. But the soul that ascends to worship the great God is plain and true; has no rose-color, no fine friends, no chivalry, no adventures; does not want admiration; dwells in the hour that now is, in the earnest experience of the common day,—by reason of the present moment and the mere trifle having become porous to thought, and bibulous of the sea of light.



Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word-catching. The simplest utterances are worthiest to be written, yet are they so cheap, and so things of course, that, in the infinite riches of the soul, it is like gathering a few pebbles off the ground, or bottling a little air in a phial, when the whole earth and the whole atmosphere are ours. Nothing can pass there, or make you one of the circle, but the casting aside your trappings, and dealing man to man in naked truth, plain confession, and omniscient affirmation.

Souls such as these treat you as gods would; walk as gods in the earth, accepting without any admiration your wit, your bounty, your virtue even,—say rather your act of duty, for your virtue they own as their proper blood, royal as themselves, and over-royal, and the father of the gods. But what rebuke their plain fraternal bearing casts on the mutual flattery with which authors solace each other and wound themselves! These flatter not. I do not wonder that these men go to see Cromwell, and Christina,<sup>3</sup> and Charles the Second, and James the First, and the Grand Turk.<sup>4</sup> For they are, in their own elevation, the fellows of kings, and must feel the servile tone of conversation in the world. They must always be a godsend to princes, for they confront them, a king to a king, without ducking or concession, and give a high nature the refreshment and satisfaction of resistance, of plain humanity, of even companionship, and of new ideas. They leave them wiser and superior men. Souls like these make us feel that sincerity is more excellent than flattery. Deal so plainly with man and woman, as to constrain the utmost sincerity, and destroy all hope of trifling with you. It is the highest compliment you can pay. Their “highest praising,” said Milton, “is not flattery, and their plainest advice is a kind of praising.”<sup>5</sup>

Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul. The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment. How dear, how soothing to man, arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments! When we have broken our god of tradition, and ceased from our god of rhetoric, then may God fire the heart with his presence. It is the doubling of the heart itself, nay, the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side. It inspires in man an infallible trust. He has not the conviction, but the sight, that the best is the true, and may in that thought easily dismiss all particular uncertainties and fears, and adjourn to the

3. Queen of Sweden. Descartes was notable among many writers and artists who enjoyed the hospitality of her court.

4. Then a familiar reference to the

former magnificence of the Turkish sultans.

5. Milton, *Areopagitica* (1644), paragraph 4, sentence 2.

sure revelation of time, the solution of his private riddles. He is sure that his welfare is dear to the heart of being. In the presence of law to his mind, he is overflowed with a reliance so universal, that it sweeps away all cherished hopes and the most stable projects of mortal condition in its flood. He believes that he cannot escape from his good. The things that are really for thee gravitate to thee. You are running to seek your friend. Let your feet run, but your mind need not. If you do not find him, will you not acquiesce that it is best you should not find him? for there is a power, which, as it is in you, is in him also, and could therefore very well bring you together, if it were for the best. You are preparing with eagerness to go and render a service to which your talent and your taste invite you, the love of men and the hope of fame. Has it not occurred to you, that you have no right to go, unless you are equally willing to be prevented from going?<sup>6</sup> O, believe, as thou livest, that every sound that is spoken over the round world, which thou oughtest to hear, will vibrate on thine ear! Every proverb, every book, every byword that belongs to thee for aid or comfort, shall surely come home through open or winding passages. Every friend whom not thy fantastic will, but the great and tender heart in thee craveth, shall lock thee in his embrace. And this, because the heart in thee is the heart of all; not a valve, not a wall, not an intersection is there anywhere in nature, but one blood rolls uninterruptedly an endless circulation through all men, as the water of the globe is all one sea, and, truly seen, its tide is one.

Let man, then, learn the revelation of all nature and all thought to his heart; this, namely; that the Highest dwells with him; that the sources of nature are in his own mind, if the sentiment of duty is there. But if he would know what the great God speaketh, he must "go into his closet and shut the door,"<sup>7</sup> as Jesus said. God will not make himself manifest to cowards. He must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing himself from all the accents of other men's devotion. Even their prayers are hurtful to him, until he have made his own. Our religion vulgarly stands on numbers of believers. Whenever the appeal is made—no matter how indirectly—to numbers, proclamation is then and there made, that religion is not. He that finds God a sweet, enveloping thought to him never counts his company. When I sit in that presence, who shall dare to come in? When I rest in perfect humility, when I burn with pure love, what can Calvin<sup>8</sup> or Swedenborg say?

It makes no difference whether the appeal is to numbers or to one.

6. The sentence appears as Emerson's journal entry on the eve of his "Divinity School Address" (July 15, 1838); the entire paragraph was developed in a sermon the following winter.

7. Cf. Matthew vi: 6.

8. John Calvin (1509–1564), whose theology supported the authoritarianism of the Puritans, is contrasted with the mystical Swedenborg; see the following paragraph.

The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul. The position men have given to Jesus, now for many centuries of history, is a position of authority. It characterizes themselves. It cannot alter the eternal facts. Great is the soul, and plain. It is no flatterer, it is no follower; it never appeals from itself. It believes in itself. Before the immense possibilities of man, all mere experience, all past biography, however spotless and sainted, shrinks away. Before that heaven which our presentiments foreshow us, we cannot easily praise any form of life we have seen or read of. We not only affirm that we have few great men, but, absolutely speaking, that we have none; that we have no history, no record of any character or mode of living, that entirely contents us. The saints and demigods whom history worships we are constrained to accept with a grain of allowance. Though in our lonely hours we draw a new strength out of their memory, yet, pressed on our attention, as they are by the thoughtless and customary, they fatigue and invade. The soul gives itself, alone, original, and pure, to the Lonely, Original, and Pure, who, on that condition, gladly inhabits, leads, and speaks through it. Then is it glad, young, and nimble. It is not wise, but it sees through all things. It is not called religious, but it is innocent. It calls the light its own, and feels that the grass grows and the stone falls by a law inferior to, and dependent on, its nature. Behold, it saith, I am born into the great, the universal mind. I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and the stars, and feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass. More and more the surges of everlasting nature enter into me, and I become public and human in my regards and actions. So come I to live in thoughts, and act with energies, which are immortal. Thus revering the soul, and learning, as the ancient said, that "its beauty is immense," man will come to see that the world is the perennial miracle which the soul worketh, and be less astonished at particular wonders; he will learn that there is no profane history; that all history is sacred; that the universe is represented in an atom, in a moment of time. He will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches,<sup>9</sup> but he will live with a divine unity. He will cease from what is base and frivolous in his life, and be content with all places and with any service he can render. He will calmly front the morrow in the negligency of that trust which carries God with it and so hath already the whole future in the bottom of the heart.

9. *Cf.* Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 4, l. 102.

Divinity School Address<sup>1</sup>

In this refulgent summer, it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life. The grass grows, the buds burst, the meadow is spotted with fire and gold in the tint of flowers. The air is full of birds, and sweet with the breath of the pine, the balm-of-Gilead, and the new hay. Night brings no gloom to the heart with its welcome shade. Through the transparent darkness the stars pour their almost spiritual rays. Man under them seems a young child, and his huge globe a toy. The cool night bathes the world as with a river, and prepares his eyes again for the crimson dawn. The mystery of nature was never displayed more happily. The corn and the wine have been freely dealt to all creatures, and the never-broken silence with which the old bounty goes forward has not yielded yet one word of explanation. One is constrained to respect the perfection of this world in which our senses converse. How wide; how rich; what invitation from every property it gives to every faculty of man! In its fruitful soils; in its navigable sea; in its mountains of metal and stone; in its forests of all woods; in its animals; in its chemical ingredients; in the powers and path of light, heat, attraction and life, it is well worth the pith and heart of great men to subdue and enjoy it. The planters, the mechanics, the inventors, the astronomers, the builders of cities, and the captains, history delights to honor.

But when the mind opens and reveals the laws which traverse the universe and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once into a mere illustration and fable of this mind. What

1. It was at the request of the students themselves, not the faculty, that Emerson addressed the Harvard Senior Class in Divinity on Sunday evening, July 15, 1838. In his *Journal* during March he mentions his preoccupation with the desire to show these students how the "ugliness and unprofitableness" of the prevailing theology failed to represent "the glory and sweetness of the moral nature." The address offended conservative belief, thus arousing a minor controversy in the lay and religious press. In this Emerson himself took no part, referring to it as "a storm in a wash-bowl." However, he replied (October 8, 1838) to a letter from his predecessor as pastor at the Second Church of Boston, the Rev. Henry Ware, Jr., in a memorable statement of the transcendental method of knowing, in part as follows: "I have always been, from my very incapacity of methodical writing, 'a chartered libertine,' free to worship and free to rail; lucky when

I could make myself understood, but never esteemed near enough to the institutions and mind of society to deserve the notice of the masters of literature and religion. \* \* \* I could not give account of myself, if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the 'arguments' you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands. For I do not know what arguments mean in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men. I do not even see that either of these questions admits of an answer."

Official Harvard's reaction to the Address is evident from the fact that Emerson was not invited to lecture again at the College for almost thirty years. On the centenary of his birth, however, in 1903, a memorial tablet in his honor was placed in the chapel where he had spoken.

am I? and What is? asks the human spirit with a curiosity new-kindled, but never to be quenched. Behold these outrunning laws, which our imperfect apprehension can see tend this way and that, but not come full circle. Behold these infinite relations, so like, so unlike; many, yet one. I would study, I would know, I would admire forever. These works of thought have been the entertainments of the human spirit in all ages.

A more secret, sweet, and overpowering beauty appears to man when his heart and mind open to the sentiment of virtue. Then he is instructed in what is above him. He learns that his being is without bound; that to the good, to the perfect, he is born, low as he now lies in evil and weakness. That which he venerates is still his own, though he has not realized it yet. *He ought*. He knows the sense of that grand word, though his analysis fails to render account of it. When in innocency or when by intellectual perception he attains to say,—“I love the Right; Truth is beautiful within and without for evermore. Virtue, I am thine; save me; use me; thee will I serve, day and night, in great, in small, that I may be not virtuous, but virtue”;—then is the end of the creation answered, and God is well pleased.

The sentiment of virtue is a reverence and delight in the presence of certain divine laws. It perceives that this homely game of life we play, covers, under what seem foolish details, principles that astonish. The child amidst his baubles is learning the action of light, motion, gravity, muscular force; and in the game of human life, love, fear, justice, appetite, man, and God, interact. These laws refuse to be adequately stated. They will not be written out on paper, or spoken by the tongue. They elude our persevering thought; yet we read them hourly in each other's faces, in each other's actions, in our own remorse. The moral traits which are all globed into every virtuous act and thought,—in speech we must sever, and describe or suggest by painful enumeration of many particulars. Yet, as this sentiment is the essence of all religion, let me guide your eye to the precise objects of the sentiment, by an enumeration of some of those classes of facts in which this element is conspicuous.

The intuition of the moral sentiment is an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul. These laws execute themselves. They are out of time, out of space, and not subject to circumstance. Thus in the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire. He who does a noble deed is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed is by the action itself contracted. He who puts off impurity, thereby puts on purity. If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into

that man with justice. If a man dissemble, deceive, he deceives himself, and goes out of acquaintance with his own being. A man in the view of absolute goodness, adores, with total humility. Every step so downward, is a step upward. The man who renounces himself, comes to himself.

See how this rapid intrinsic energy worketh everywhere, righting wrongs, correcting appearances, and bringing up facts to a harmony with thoughts. Its operation in life, though slow to the senses, is at last as sure as in the soul. By it a man is made the Providence to himself, dispensing good to his goodness, and evil to his sin. Character is always known. Thefts never enrich; alms never impoverish; murder will speak out of stone walls. The least admixture of a lie,—for example, the taint of vanity, any attempt to make a good impression, a favorable appearance,—will instantly vitiate the effect. But speak the truth, and all nature and all spirits help you with unexpected furtherance. Speak the truth, and all things alive or brute are vouchers, and the very roots of the grass underground there do seem to stir and move to bear you witness. See again the perfection of the Law as it applies itself to the affections, and becomes the law of society. As we are, so we associate. The good, by affinity, seek the good; the vile, by affinity, the vile. Thus of their own volition, souls proceed into heaven, into hell.

These facts have always suggested to man the sublime creed that the world is not the product of manifold power, but of one will, of one mind; and that one mind is everywhere active, in each ray of the star, in each wavelet of the pool; and whatever opposes that will is everywhere balked and baffled, because things are made so, and not otherwise. Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute: it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity.<sup>2</sup> Benevolence is absolute and real. So much benevolence as a man hath, so much life hath he. For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes. All things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, or auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels, he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death.

2. In spite of statements often heard to the contrary, Emerson here plainly accepts the "odious fact" of evil. But evil is not, in the sense of logic, a "positive." Positives are absolute expressions of being, and "good" is one of them, a state of positive existence,

to which "evil" is only a "privative," depriving good of some measure of its being. Good could be complete, but evil could not; if the deprivation (or evil) became complete, there would result "nonentity," neither good nor evil, but nothingness.

The perception of this law of laws awakens in the mind a sentiment which we call the religious sentiment, and which makes our highest happiness. Wonderful is its power to charm and to command. It is a mountain air. It is the embalmer of the world. It is myrrh and storax, and chlorine and rosemary. It makes the sky and the hills sublime, and the silent song of the stars is it. By it is the universe made safe and habitable, not by science or power. Thought may work cold and intransitive in things, and find no end or unity; but the dawn of the sentiment of virtue on the heart, gives and is the assurance that Law is sovereign over all natures; and the worlds, time, space, eternity, do seem to break out into joy.

This sentiment is divine and deifying. It is the beatitude of man. It makes him illimitable. Through it, the soul first knows itself. It corrects the capital mistake of the infant man, who seeks to be great by following the great, and hopes to derive advantages *from another*,—by showing the fountain of all good to be in himself, and that he, equally with every man, is an inlet into the deeps of Reason. When he says, “I ought”; when love warms him; when he chooses, warned from on high, the good and great deed; then, deep melodies wander through his soul from Supreme Wisdom.—Then he can worship, and be enlarged by his worship; for he can never go behind this sentiment. In the sublimest flights of the soul, rectitude is never surmounted, love is never outgrown.

This sentiment lies at the foundation of society, and successively creates all forms of worship. The principle of veneration never dies out. Man fallen into superstition, into sensuality, is never quite without the visions of the moral sentiment. In like manner, all the expressions of this sentiment are sacred and permanent in proportion to their purity. The expressions of this sentiment affect us more than all other compositions. The sentences of the oldest time, which ejaculate this piety, are still fresh and fragrant. This thought dwelled always deepest in the minds of men in the devout and contemplative East; not alone in Palestine, where it reached its purest expression, but in Egypt, in Persia, in India, in China. Europe has always owed to oriental genius its divine impulses. What these holy bards said, all sane men found agreeable and true. And the unique impression of Jesus upon mankind, whose name is not so much written as ploughed into the history of this world, is proof of the subtle virtue of this infusion.

Meantime, whilst the doors of the temple stand open, day and night, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely: it is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or reject; and on his

word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing. On the contrary, the absence of this primary faith is the presence of degradation. As is the flood, so is the ebb. Let this faith depart, and the very words it spake and the things it made become false and hurtful. Then falls the church, the state, art, letters, life. The doctrine of the divine nature being forgotten, a sickness infects and dwarfs the constitution. Once man was all; now he is an appendage, a nuisance. And because the indwelling Supreme Spirit cannot wholly be got rid of, the doctrine of it suffers this perversion, that the divine nature is attributed to one or two persons, and denied to all the rest, and denied with fury. The doctrine of inspiration is lost; the base doctrine of the majority of voices usurps the place of the doctrine of the soul. Miracles, prophecy, poetry, the ideal life, the holy life, exist as ancient history merely; they are not in the belief, nor in the aspiration of society; but, when suggested, seem ridiculous. Life is comic or pitiful as soon as the high ends of being fade out of sight, and man becomes near-sighted, and can only attend to what addresses the senses.

These general views, which, whilst they are general, none will contest, find abundant illustration in the history of religion, and especially in the history of the Christian church. In that, all of us have had our birth and nurture. The truth contained in that, you, my young friends, are now setting forth to teach. As the Cultus, or established worship of the civilized world, it has great historical interest for us. Of its blessed words, which have been the consolation of humanity, you need not that I should speak. I shall endeavor to discharge my duty to you on this occasion, by pointing out two errors in its administration, which daily appear more gross from the point of view we have just now taken.

Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, he lived in it, and had his being there. Alone in all history he estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his World. He said, in this jubilee of sublime emotion, "I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me; or see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think." But what a distortion did his doctrine and memory suffer in the same, in the next, and the following ages! There is no doctrine of the Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding. The understanding caught this high chant from the poet's lips, and said, in the next age, "This was Jehovah come down out of heaven. I will kill you, if you say he was a man." The idioms of his language and the figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of his



truth; and churches are not built on his principles, but on his tropes. Christianity became a Mythos, as the poetic teaching of Greece and of Egypt, before. He spoke of miracles; for he felt that man's life was a miracle, and all that man doth, and he knew that this daily miracle shines as the character ascends. But the word Miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is Monster. It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain.<sup>3</sup>

He felt respect for Moses and the prophets, but no unfit tenderness at postponing their initial revelations to the hour and the man that now is; to the eternal revelation in the heart. Thus was he a true man. Having seen that the law in us is commanding, he would not suffer it to be commanded. Boldly, with hand, and heart, and life, he declared it was God. Thus is he, as I think, the only soul in history who has appreciated the worth of man.

1. In this point of view we become sensible of the first defect of historical Christianity. Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus. The soul knows no persons. It invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe, and will have no preferences but those of spontaneous love. But by this eastern monarchy of a Christianity, which indolence and fear have built, the friend of man is made the injurer of man. The manner in which his name is surrounded with expressions which were once sallies of admiration and love, but are now petrified into official titles, kills all generous sympathy and liking. All who hear me, feel that the language that describes Christ to Europe and America is not the style of friendship and enthusiasm to a good and noble heart, but is appropriated and formal,—paints a demigod, as the Orientals or the Greeks would describe Osiris or Apollo. Accept the injurious impositions of our early catechetical instruction, and even honesty and self-denial were but splendid sins, if they did not wear the Christian name. One would rather be

“A pagan, suckled in a creed outworn,”

3. A denial of the miraculous and special divinity of Jesus Christ was the extreme limit of Emerson's radicalism. Beginning with the Unitarian “unity” of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (as contrasted with the trinitarian view), he builds the syllogism early in this paragraph: Jesus Christ was God incarnate; the divine Jesus was also man; therefore another man, by being true to the God incarnate in him, may also

be “divine” in the sense that Jesus was. The divinity of Christ was a miracle only as all things are—“the blowing clover and the falling rain.” Later transcendentalists in many cases accepted Emerson's position. A few advanced clergymen “proclaimed the divinity of man”—the phrase appears on the tombstone of William Ellery Channing—but in 1838 it was a Unitarian “heresy.”

than to be defrauded of his manly right in coming into nature and finding not names and places, not land and professions, but even virtue and truth foreclosed and monopolized. You shall not be a man even. You shall not own the world; you shall not dare and live after the infinite Law that is in you, and in company with the infinite Beauty which heaven and earth reflect to you in all lovely forms; but you must subordinate your nature to Christ's nature; you must accept our interpretations, and take his portrait as the vulgar draw it.

That is always best which gives me to myself. The sublime is excited in me by the great stoical doctrine, Obey thyself. That which shows God in me, fortifies me. That which shows God out of me, makes me a wart and a wen. There is no longer a necessary reason for my being. Already the long shadows of untimely oblivion creep over me, and I shall de cease forever.

The divine bards are the friends of my virtue, of my intellect, of my strength. They admonish me that the gleams which flash across my mind are not mine, but God's; that they had the like, and were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. So I love them. Noble provocations go out from them, inviting me to resist evil; to subdue the world; and to Be. And thus, by his holy thoughts, Jesus serves us, and thus only. To aim to convert a man by miracles is a profanation of the soul. A true conversion, a true Christ, is now, as always, to be made by the reception of beautiful sentiments. It is true that a great and rich soul, like his, falling among the simple, does so preponderate, that, as his did, it names the world. The world seems to exist for him, and they have not yet drunk so deeply of his sense as to see that only by coming again to themselves, or to God in themselves, can they grow forevermore. It is a low benefit to give me something; it is a high benefit to enable me to do somewhat of myself. The time is coming when all men will see that the gift of God to the soul is not a vaunting, overpowering, excluding sanctity, but a sweet, natural goodness, a goodness like thine and mine, and that so invites thine and mine to be and to grow.

The injustice of the vulgar tone of preaching is not less flagrant to Jesus than to the souls which it profanes. The preachers do not see that they make his gospel not glad, and shear him of the locks of beauty and the attributes of heaven. When I see a majestic Epaminondas,<sup>4</sup> or Washington; when I see among my contemporaries a true orator, an upright judge, a dear friend; when I vibrate to the melody and fancy of a poem; I see beauty that is to be desired. And so lovely, and yet with more entire consent of my human being, sounds in my ear the severe music of the bards that have sung of the true God in all ages. Now do not degrade the life and

4. Theban statesman and general (ca. 418–362 B.C.), famous for his integrity and leadership.

dialogues of Christ out of the circle of this charm, by insulation and peculiarity. Let them lie as they befell, alive and warm, part of human life and of the landscape and of the cheerful day.

2. The second defect of the traditionary and limited way of using the mind of Christ is a consequence of the first; this namely: that the Moral Nature, that Law of laws whose revelations introduce greatness—yea, God himself—into the open soul, is not explored as the fountain of the established teaching in society. Men have come to speak of the revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead. The injury to faith throttles the preacher; and the goodliest of institutions becomes an uncertain and inarticulate voice.

It is very certain that it is the effect of conversation with the beauty of the soul, to beget a desire and need to impart to others the same knowledge and love. If utterance is denied, the thought lies like a burden on the man. Always the seer is a sayer. Somehow his dream is told; somehow he publishes it with solemn joy: sometimes with pencil on canvas; sometimes with chisel on stone; sometimes in towers and aisles of granite, his soul's worship is builded; sometimes in anthems of indefinite music; but clearest and most permanent, in words.

The man enamored of this excellency becomes its priest or poet. The office is coeval with the world. But observe the condition, the spiritual limitation of the office. The spirit only can teach. Not any profane man, not any sensual, not any liar, not any slave can teach, but only he can give, who has; he only can create, who is. The man on whom the soul descends, through whom the soul speaks, alone can teach. Courage, piety, love, wisdom, can teach; and every man can open his door to these angels, and they shall bring him the gift of tongues. But the man who aims to speak as books enable, as synods use, as the fashion guides, and as interest commands, babbles. Let him hush.

To this holy office you propose to devote yourselves. I wish you may feel your call in throbs of desire and hope. The office is the first in the world. It is of that reality that it cannot suffer the deduction of any falsehood. And it is my duty to say to you that the need was never greater of new revelation than now. From the views I have already expressed, you will infer the sad conviction, which I share, I believe, with numbers, of the universal decay and now almost death of faith in society. The soul is not preached. The Church seems to totter to its fall, almost all life extinct. On this occasion, any complaisance would be criminal which told you, whose hope and commission it is to preach the faith of Christ, that the faith of Christ is preached.

It is time that this ill-suppressed murmur of all thoughtful men against the famine of our churches;—this moaning of the heart

because it is bereaved of the consolation, the hope, the grandeur that come alone out of the culture of the moral nature,—should be heard through the sleep of indolence, and over the din of routine. This great and perpetual office of the preacher is not discharged. Preaching is the expression of the moral sentiment in application to the duties of life. In how many churches, by how many prophets, tell me, is man made sensible that he is an infinite Soul; that the earth and heavens are passing into his mind; that he is drinking forever the soul of God? Where now sounds the persuasion, that by its very melody imparadises my heart, and so affirms its own origin in heaven? Where shall I hear words such as in elder ages drew men to leave all and follow,—father and mother, house and land, wife and child? Where shall I hear these august laws of moral being so pronounced as to fill my ear, and I feel ennobled by the offer of my uttermost action and passion? The test of the true faith, certainly, should be its power to charm and command the soul, as the laws of nature control the activity of the hands,—so commanding that we find pleasure and honor in obeying. The faith should blend with the light of rising and of setting suns, with the flying cloud, the singing bird, and the breath of flowers. But now the priest's Sabbath has lost the splendor of nature; it is unlovely; we are glad when it is done; we can make, we do make, even sitting in our pews, a far better, holier, sweeter, for ourselves.

Whenever the pulpit is usurped by a formalist, then is the worshipper defrauded and disconsolate. We shrink as soon as the prayers begin, which do not uplift, but smite and offend us. We are fain to wrap our cloaks about us, and secure, as best we can, a solitude that hears not. I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no soul entered the temple in the afternoon. A snow-storm was falling around us. The snow-storm was real, the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession, namely, to convert life into truth, he had not learned. Not one fact in all his experience had he yet imported into his doctrine. This man had ploughed and planted and talked and bought and sold; he had read books; he had eaten and drunken; his head aches, his heart throbs; he smiles and suffers; yet was there not a surmise, a hint, in all the discourse, that he had ever lived at all. Not a line did he draw out of real history. The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to his people his life,—life passed

through the fire of thought. But of the bad preacher, it could not be told from his sermon what age of the world he fell in; whether he had a father or a child; whether he was a freeholder or a pauper; whether he was a citizen or a countryman; or any other fact of his biography. It seemed strange that the people should come to church. It seemed as if their houses were very unentertaining, that they should prefer this thoughtless clamor. It shows that there is a commanding attraction in the moral sentiment, that can lend a faint tint of light to dulness and ignorance coming in its name and place. The good hearer is sure he has been touched sometimes; is sure there is somewhat to be reached, and some word that can reach it. When he listens to these vain words, he comforts himself by their relation to his remembrance of better hours, and so they clatter and echo unchallenged.

I am not ignorant that when we preach unworthily, it is not always quite in vain. There is a good ear, in some men, that draws supplies to virtue out of very indifferent nutriment. There is poetic truth concealed in all the commonplaces of prayer and of sermons, and though foolishly spoken, they may be wisely heard; for each is some select expression that broke out in a moment of piety from some stricken or jubilant soul, and its excellency made it remembered. The prayers and even the dogmas of our church are like the zodiac of Denderah<sup>5</sup> and the astronomical monuments of the Hindoos, wholly insulated from anything now extant in the life and business of the people. They mark the height to which the waters once rose. But this docility is a check upon the mischief from the good and devout. In a large portion of the community, the religious service gives rise to quite other thoughts and emotions. We need not chide the negligent servant. We are struck with pity, rather, at the swift retribution of his sloth. Alas for the unhappy man that is called to stand in the pulpit, and *not* give bread of life. Everything that befalls, accuses him. Would he ask contributions for the missions, foreign or domestic? Instantly his face is suffused with shame, to propose to his parish that they should send money a hundred or a thousand miles, to furnish such poor fare as they have at home and would do well to go the hundred or the thousand miles to escape. Would he urge people to a godly way of living;—and can he ask a fellow-creature to come to Sabbath meetings, when he and they all know what is the poor uttermost they can hope for therein? Will he invite them privately to the Lord's Supper?<sup>6</sup> He dares not. If no heart warm this rite, the hollow, dry,

5. Denderah (or Tentyra) was an ancient city in Egypt, dedicated to the worship of the goddess Hathor.

6. In 1832, when Emerson decided he must give up his ministry, he especially

emphasized his inability to find any special grace or sanction in the Lord's Supper. Now he is associating this with all formalism—the giving the “bread” without the “life” of religion.

creaking formality is too plain, than that he can face a man of wit and energy and put the invitation without terror. In the street, what has he to say to the bold village blasphemer? The village blasphemer sees fear in the face, form, and gait of the minister.

Let me not taint the sincerity of this plea by any oversight of the claims of good men. I know and honor the purity and strict conscience of numbers of the clergy. What life the public worship retains, it owes to the scattered company of pious men, who minister here and there in the churches, and who, sometimes accepting with too great tenderness the tenet of the elders, have not accepted from others, but from their own heart, the genuine impulses of virtue, and so still command our love and awe, to the sanctity of character. Moreover, the exceptions are not so much to be found in a few eminent preachers, as in the better hours, the truer inspirations of all,—nay, in the sincere moments of every man. But, with whatever exception, it is still true that tradition characterizes the preaching of this country; that it comes out of the memory, and not out of the soul; that it aims at what is usual, and not at what is necessary and eternal; that thus historical Christianity destroys the power of preaching, by withdrawing it from the exploration of the moral nature of man; where the sublime is, where are the resources of astonishment and power. What a cruel injustice it is to that Law, the joy of the whole earth, which alone can make the thought dear and rich; that Law whose fatal sureness the astronomical orbits poorly emulate;—that it is travestied and depreciated, that it is be-hooted and behowled, and not a trait, not a word of it articulated. The pulpit in losing sight of this Law, loses its reason, and gropes after it knows not what. And for want of this culture the soul of the community is sick and faithless. It wants nothing so much as a stern, high, stoical, Christian discipline, to make it know itself and the divinity that speaks through it. Now man is ashamed of himself; he skulks and sneaks through the world, to be tolerated, to be pitied, and scarcely in a thousand years does any man dare to be wise and good, and so draw after him the tears and blessings of his kind.

Certainly there have been periods when, from the inactivity of the intellect on certain truths, a greater faith was possible in names and persons. The Puritans in England and America found in the Christ of the Catholic Church and in the dogmas inherited from Rome, scope for their austere piety and their longings for civil freedom. But their creed is passing away, and none arises in its room. I think no man can go with his thoughts about him into one of our churches, without feeling that what hold the public worship had on men is gone, or going. It has lost its grasp on the affection

of the good and the fear of the bad. In the country, neighborhoods, half parishes are *signing off*, to use the local term. It is already beginning to indicate character and religion to withdraw from the religious meetings. I have heard a devout person, who prized the Sabbath, say in bitterness of heart, "On Sundays, it seems wicked to go to church." And the motive that holds the best there is now only a hope and a waiting. What was once a mere circumstance, that the best and the worst men in the parish, the poor and the rich, the learned and the ignorant, young and old, should meet one day as fellows in one house, in sign of an equal right in the soul, has come to be a paramount motive for going thither.

My friends, in these two errors, I think, I find the causes of a decaying church and a wasting unbelief. And what greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship? Then all things go to decay. Genius leaves the temple to haunt the senate or the market. Literature becomes frivolous. Science is cold. The eye of youth is not lighted by the hope of other worlds, and age is without honor. Society lives to trifles, and when men die we do not mention them.

And now, my brothers, you will ask, What in these desponding days can be done by us? The remedy is already declared in the ground of our complaint of the Church. We have contrasted the Church with the Soul. In the soul then let the redemption be sought. Wherever a man comes, there comes revolution. The old is for slaves. When a man comes, all books are legible, all things transparent, all religions are forms. He is religious. Man is the wonderworker. He is seen amid miracles. All men bless and curse. He saith yea and nay, only. The stationariness of religion; the assumption that the age of inspiration is past, that the Bible is closed; the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man;—indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake. The true Christianity,—a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man,—is lost. None believeth in the soul of man, but only in some man or person old and departed. Ah me! no man goeth alone. All men go in flocks to this saint or that poet, avoiding the God who seeth in secret. They cannot see in secret; they love to be blind in public. They think society wiser than their soul, and know not that one soul, and their soul, is wiser than the whole world. See how nations and races flit by on the sea of time and leave no ripple to tell where they floated or sunk, and one good soul shall make the name of Moses, or of Zeno, or of Zoroaster,<sup>7</sup> reverend forever. None assayeth the stern am-

7. Zeno, Greek philosopher of the late fourth and early third centuries B.C., founded the Stoic school of philosophy;

Zoroaster reputedly initiated and gave his name to the religion of the ancient Persians.

bition to be the Self of the nation and of nature, but each would be an easy secondary to some Christian scheme, or sectarian connection, or some eminent man. Once leave your own knowledge of God, your own sentiment, and take secondary knowledge, as St. Paul's, or George Fox's, or Swedenborg's,<sup>8</sup> and you get wide from God with every year this secondary form lasts, and if, as now, for centuries,—the chasm yawns to that breadth, that men can scarcely be convinced there is in them anything divine.

Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred to the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation Wesleys and Oberlins,<sup>9</sup> Saints and Prophets. Thank God for these good men, but say, "I also am a man." Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity. The inventor did it because it was natural to him, and so in him it has a charm. In the imitator something else is natural, and he bereaves himself of his own beauty, to come short of another man's.

Yourself a newborn bard of the Holy Ghost, cast behind you all conformity, and acquaint men at first hand with Deity. Look to it first and only, that fashion, custom, authority, pleasure, and money, are nothing to you,—are not bandages over your eyes, that you cannot see,—but live with the privilege of the immeasurable mind. Not too anxious to visit periodically all families and each family in your parish connection,—when you meet one of these men or women, be to them a divine man; be to them thought and virtue; let their timid aspirations find in you a friend; let their trampled instincts be genially tempted out in your atmosphere; let their doubts know that you have doubted, and their wonder feel that you have wondered. By trusting your own heart, you shall gain more confidence in other men. For all our penny-wisdom, for all our soul-destroying slavery to habit, it is not to be doubted that all men have sublime thoughts; that all men value the few real hours of life; they love to be heard; they love to be caught up into the vision of principles. We mark with light in the memory the few interviews we have had, in the dreary years of routine and of sin, with souls that made our souls wiser; that spoke what we thought; that told us what we knew; that gave us leave to be what we inly were. Discharge to men the priestly office, and, present or absent, you shall be followed with their love as by an angel.

8. The teachings of Fox (1624–1691), founder of the Society of Friends, were developed largely as a protest against the Presbyterian system; Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1722) devoted much of his life to psychical and spiritual research and wrote works of Scriptural interpretation.

9. *I.e.*, men of the caliber of John Wesley (1703–1791), the evangelist and theologian who founded Methodism, or Jean Frédéric Oberlin (1740–1826), a Protestant clergyman famed for his improvements of education and morality in his Alsatian pastorate.



And, to this end, let us not aim at common degrees of merit. Can we not leave, to such as love it, the virtue that glitters for the commendation of society, and ourselves pierce the deep solitudes of absolute ability and worth? We easily come up to the standard of goodness in society. Society's praise can be cheaply secured, and almost all men are content with those easy merits; but the instant effect of conversing with God will be to put them away. There are persons who are not actors, not speakers, but influences; persons too great for fame, for display; who disdain eloquence; to whom all we call art and artist, seems too nearly allied to show and by-ends, to the exaggeration of the finite and selfish, and loss of the universal. The orators, the poets, the commanders encroach on us only as fair women do, by our allowance and homage. Slight them by preoccupation of mind, slight them, as you can well afford to do, by high and universal aims, and they instantly feel that you have right, and that it is in lower places that they must shine. They also feel your right; for they with you are open to the influx of the all-knowing Spirit, which annihilates before its broad noon the little shades and gradations of intelligence in the compositions we call wiser and wisest.

In such high communion let us study the grand strokes of rectitude: a bold benevolence, an independence of friends, so that not the unjust wishes of those who love us shall impair our freedom, but we shall resist for truth's sake the freest flow of kindness, and appeal to sympathies far in advance; and—what is the highest form in which we know this beautiful element,—a certain solidity of merit, that has nothing to do with opinion, and which is so essentially and manifestly virtue, that it is taken for granted that the right, the brave, the generous step will be taken by it, and nobody thinks of commending it. You would compliment a coxcomb doing a good act, but you would not praise an angel. The silence that accepts merit as the most natural thing in the world, is the highest applause. Such souls, when they appear, are the Imperial Guard of Virtue, the perpetual reserve, the dictators of fortune. One needs not praise their courage,—they are the heart and soul of nature. O my friends, there are resources in us on which we have not drawn. There are men who rise refreshed on hearing a threat; men to whom a crisis which intimidates and paralyzes the majority,—demanding not the faculties of prudence and thrift, but comprehension, immovableness, the readiness of sacrifice,—comes graceful and beloved as a bride. Napoleon said of Massena, that he was not himself until the battle began to go against him; then, when the dead began to fall in ranks around him, awoke his powers of combination, and he put on terror and victory as a robe. So it is in rugged crises, in unweariable endurance, and in aims which put sympathy out of

the question, that the angel is shown. But these are heights that we can scarce remember and look up to without contrition and shame. Let us thank God that such things exist.

And now let us do what we can to rekindle the smouldering, nigh quenched fire on the altar. The evils of the church that now is are manifest. The question returns, What shall we do? I confess, all attempts to project and establish a Cultus with new rites and forms, seem to me vain. Faith makes us, and not we it, and faith makes its own forms. All attempts to contrive a system are as cold as the new worship introduced by the French to the goddess of Reason,—today, pasteboard and filigree, and ending tomorrow in madness and murder. Rather let the breath of new life be breathed by you through the forms already existing. For if once you are alive, you shall find they shall become plastic and new. The remedy to their deformity is first, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul. A whole popedom of forms one pulsation of virtue can uplift and vivify. Two inestimable advantages Christianity has given us; first the Sabbath, the jubilee of the whole world, whose light dawns welcome alike into the closet of the philosopher, into the garret of toil, and into prison-cells, and everywhere suggests, even to the vile, the dignity of spiritual being. Let it stand forevermore, a temple, which new love, new faith, new sight shall restore to more than its first splendor to mankind. And secondly, the institution of preaching,—the speech of man to men,—essentially the most flexible of all organs, of all forms. What hinders that now, everywhere, in pulpits, in lecture-rooms, in houses, in fields, wherever the invitation of men or your own occasions lead you, you speak the very truth, as your life and conscience teach it, and cheer the waiting, fainting hearts of men with new hope and new revelation?

I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, that have been bread of life to millions. But they have no epical integrity; are fragmentary; are not shown in their order to the intellect. I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace; shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul; shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart; and shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy.

Mithridates<sup>1</sup>

I cannot spare water or wine,  
 'Tobacco-leaf, or poppy, or rose;  
 From the earth-poles to the Line,<sup>2</sup>  
 All between that works or grows,  
 Every thing is kin of mine.

5

Give me agates<sup>3</sup> for my meat;  
 Give me cantharids to eat;  
 From air and ocean bring me foods,  
 From all zones and altitudes;—

From all natures, sharp and slimy,  
 Salt and basalt, wild and tame:  
 'Tree and lichen, ape, sca-lion,  
 Bird, and reptile, be my game.

10

Ivy for my fillet band;<sup>4</sup>  
 Blinding dog-wood in my hand;  
 Hemlock for my sherbet cull me,  
 And the prussic juice to lull me;  
 Swing me in the upas boughs,  
 Vampyre-fanned, when I carouse.

15

Too long shut in strait and few,  
 Thinly dicted on dew,  
 I will use the world, and sift it,  
 To a thousand humors shift it,  
 As you spin a cherry.  
 O doleful ghosts, and goblins merry!  
 O all you virtues, methods, mights,  
 Means, appliances, delights,  
 Reputed wrongs and braggart rights,  
 Smug routine, and things allowed,  
 Minorities, things under cloud!  
 Hither! take me, use me, fill me,  
 Vein and artery, though ye kill me!

20

25

30

1847

1. King Mithridates VI of Pontus (d. 63 B.C.), fearing assassination, became immune to poisons by taking increasing doses of them; he died finally by his own hand.

2. The equator.

3. Ancient good-luck pieces; "cantharids," a stimulating drug made of dried beetles.

4. Bacchus, god of wine, wore an ivy crown; the ivy and other plants named below yield poisons.

## Concord Hymn

SUNG AT THE COMPLETION OF THE BATTLE MONUMENT,<sup>4</sup>

JULY 4, 1837

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
 Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
 Here once the embattled farmers stood  
 And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept; 5  
 Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;  
 And Time the ruined bridge has swept  
 Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,  
 We set to-day a votive stone; 10  
 That memory may their deed redeem,  
 When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare  
 To die, and leave their children free,  
 Bid Time and Nature gently spare 15  
 The shaft we raise to them and thee.

1837, 1876

Each and All<sup>5</sup>

Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown  
 Of thee from the hill-top looking down;  
 The heifer that lows in the upland farm,  
 Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm;  
 The sexton, tolling his bell at noon, 5  
 Deems not that great Napoleon  
 Stops his horse, and lists with delight,  
 Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height;  
 Nor knowest thou what argument  
 Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent. 10

4. The monument commemorates the battles of Lexington and Concord, April 19, 1775. At the dedication, this poem was distributed as a printed leaflet; it was not collected until the *Selected Poems* of 1876, for which Emerson made slight revisions, here retained. He also changed the title to "Concord Fight," and wrongly dated the commemoration as "April 19, 1836." The editors of the Centenary Edition restored the now familiar title, and corrected the

date to July 4, 1837. We have followed them in these respects.

5. The transcendent unity of the many and the one, presented from various angles in the essays, from *Nature* to "Plato," here begets one of Emerson's most characteristic poems. At least the episode of the sea shells is actual; Emerson recorded it in his Journal for May 16, 1834. The poem appeared in the *Western Messenger* for February, 1839, and in the collections of 1847 and 1876.

All are needed by each one;  
Nothing is fair or good alone.  
I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,  
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;  
I brought him home, in his nest, at even; 15  
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,  
For I did not bring home the river and sky;—  
He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye.  
The delicate shells lay on the shore;  
The bubbles of the latest wave 20  
Fresh pearls to their enamel gave,  
And the bellowing of the savage sea  
Greeted their safe escape to me.  
I wiped away the weeds and foam,  
I fetched my sea-born treasures home; 25  
But the poor, unsightly, noisome things  
Had left their beauty on the shore  
With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.  
The lover watched his graceful maid,  
As 'mid the virgin train she strayed, 30  
Nor knew her beauty's best attire  
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.  
At last she came to his hermitage,  
Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage:—  
The gay enchantment was undone, 35  
A gentle wife, but fairy none.  
Then I said, "I covet truth;  
Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat;  
I leave it behind with the games of youth:"—  
As I spoke, beneath my feet 40  
The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,  
Running over the club-moss burrs;  
I inhaled the violet's breath;  
Around me stood the oaks and firs;  
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground; 45  
Over me soared the eternal sky,  
Full of light and of deity;  
Again I saw, again I heard,  
The rolling river, the morning bird;—  
Beauty through my senses stole; 50  
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

## The Rhodora:

ON BEING ASKED, WHENCE IS THE FLOWER?<sup>6</sup>

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,  
 I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,  
 Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,  
 To please the desert and the sluggish brook.  
 The purple petals, fallen in the pool, 5  
 Made the black water with their beauty gay;  
 Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,  
 And court the flower that cheapens his array.  
 Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why  
 This charm is wasted on the earth and sky, 10  
 Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,  
 Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:  
 Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!  
 I never thought to ask, I never knew;  
 But, in my simple ignorance, suppose 15  
 The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

1834 1839, 1847

The Problem<sup>1</sup>

I like a church; I like a cowl;  
 I love a prophet of the soul;  
 And on my heart monastic aisles  
 Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;  
 Yet not for all his faith can see 5  
 Would I that cowed churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,  
 Which I could not on me endure?

Not from a vain or shallow thought  
 His awful Jove young Phidias<sup>2</sup> brought, 10  
 Never from lips of cunning fell

6. Like "Each and All," this is one of the four lyrics which, in 1839, were the first of Emerson's poems to be published in periodicals. "The Rhodora" first appeared in the *Western Messenger* for July, 1839, and was collected in the volumes of 1847 and 1876.

1. Soon after the "Divinity School Address," in his *Journal* for August 28, 1838, Emerson entered his objection to the "division of labor" that sets the clergyman apart from those who express in other ways the wholeness and holiness

of the divine unity. In "The Problem," the artist, poet, thinker, prophet, all the genuine Makers among men, reaffirm the same Pentecost, as priests of the God made manifest in nature. First published in *The Dial* for July, 1840, the poem was collected in the volumes of 1847 and 1876.

2. Phidias was the great sculptor of Pericles' Athens. However, his masterpiece, the Zeus ("Jove") described by Pausanias, was in the temple at Olympia.

The thrilling Delphic oracle;<sup>3</sup>  
 Out from the heart of nature rolled  
 The burdens of the Bible old;  
 The litanies of nations came, 15  
 Like the volcano's tongue of flame,  
 Up from the burning core below,—  
 The canticles of love and woe;  
 The hand that rounded Peter's dome<sup>4</sup>  
 And groined the aisles of Christian Rome 20  
 Wrought in a sad sincerity;  
 Himself from God he could not free;  
 He builded better than he knew;—  
 The conscious stone to beauty grew.  
 Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest 25  
 Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?  
 Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,  
 Painting with morn each annual cell?  
 Or how the sacred pine-tree adds  
 'To her old leaves new myriads? 30  
 Such and so grew these holy piles,  
 Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.  
 Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,<sup>5</sup>  
 As the best gem upon her zone;  
 And Morning opes with haste her lids, 35  
 To gaze upon the Pyramids;  
 O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,  
 As on its friends, with kindred eye;  
 For out of Thought's interior sphere,  
 These wonders rose to upper air; 40  
 And Nature gladly gave them place,  
 Adopted them into her race,  
 And granted them an equal date  
 With Andes and with Ararat.  
 These temples grew as grows the grass; 45  
 Art might obey, but not surpass.  
 The passive Master lent his hand  
 To the vast soul that o'er him planned;  
 And the same power that reared the shrine  
 Bestrode the tribes that knelt within. 50  
 Ever the fiery Pentecost<sup>6</sup>

3. The Delphic oracle communicated the revelations of Apollo, the loftiest embodiment of the Greek mind and creativeness.

4. Michelangelo designed and engineered the great dome of St. Peter's at Rome, nearly completed when he died in 1564.

5. Greatest architectural monument of Greek culture, it honored Athena, goddess of wisdom.

6. The miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Jesus after his resurrection. Cf. Acts ii: 1-36.

Girds with one flame the countless host,  
 Trances the heart through chanting choirs,  
 And through the priest the mind inspires.  
 'The word unto the prophet spoken 55  
 Was writ on tables yet unbroken;<sup>7</sup>  
 The word by seers or sibyls told,  
 In groves of oak, or fancies of gold,  
 Still floats upon the morning wind,  
 Still whispers to the willing mind. 60  
 One accent of the Holy Ghost  
 The heedless world hath never lost.  
 I know what say the fathers wise,—  
 'The Book itself before me lies,  
 Old Chrysostom,<sup>8</sup> best Augustine,<sup>9</sup> 65  
 And he who blent both in his line,  
 The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,  
 Taylor,<sup>1</sup> the Shakspeare of divines.  
 His words are music in my ear,  
 I see his cowled portrait dear; 70  
 And yet, for all his faith could see,  
 I would not the good bishop be.

1839

1840, 1847

### The Sphinx<sup>2</sup>

The Sphinx is drowsy,  
 Her wings are furled;  
 Her car is heavy,  
 She broods on the world.  
 'Who'll tell me my secret, 5  
 The ages have kept?—  
 I awaited the seer,  
 While they slumbered and slept;—

7. Cf. Exodus xxxii: 19.

8. John of Antioch (347?–407), Greek Church Father and saint, later called Chrysostom ("Golden Mouth") in honor of his *Homilies*.

9. St. Augustine (354–430), whose *Confessions* Emerson once called "golden words" (cf. l. 67, and Centenary Edition, Vol. IX, p. 406).

1. Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), English churchman, author of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*.

2. The Sphinx of Thebes was known in legend for her riddle, whose answer symbolized the rise and fall of man. The inscrutable Great Sphinx near the pyramids of Giza, Egypt, combines various

animal and human characteristics. The association of these ideas is clarified by Emerson's note on the meaning of the poem, in his notebooks (1859): "The perception of identity unites all things and explains one by another, and the most rare and strange is equally facile as the most common. But if the mind live only in particulars, and see only differences (wanting the power to see the whole—all in each), then the world addresses to this mind a question it cannot answer, and each new fact tears it in pieces." The poem appeared in *The Dial* for January, 1841, and in the volumes of 1847 and 1876.



'The fate of the man-child;  
     The meaning of man; 10  
 Known fruit of the Unknown;  
     Daedalian<sup>3</sup> plan;  
 Out of sleeping a waking,  
     Out of waking a sleep;  
 Life death overtaking; 15  
     Deep underneath deep?  
  
 'Erect as a sunbeam,  
     Upspringeth the palm;  
 The elephant browses,  
     Undaunted and calm; 20  
 In beautiful motion  
     The thrush plies his wings;  
 Kind leaves of his covert  
     Your silence he sings.  
  
 'The waves, unashamed, 25  
     In difference sweet,  
 Play glad with the breezes,  
     Old playfellows meet;  
 'The journeying atoms,  
     Primordial wholes, 30  
 Firmly draw, firmly drive,  
     By their animate poles.  
  
 'Sea, earth, air, sound, silence,  
     Plant, quadruped, bird,  
 By one music enchanted, 35  
     One deity stirred,—  
 Each the other adorning  
     Accompany still;  
 Night veileth the morning,  
     'The vapor the hill. 40  
  
 'The babe by its mother  
     Lies bathed in joy;  
 Glide its hours uncounted,—  
     'The sun is its toy;  
 Shines the peace of all being, 45  
     Without cloud, in its eyes;  
 And the sum of the world  
     In soft miniature lies.

3. Daedalus, in Greek mythology, personified the development of craftsman-

ship among mortals, and finally devised wings to escape the vengeance of a god.

'But man crouches and blushes,  
     Absconds and conceals; 50  
 He creepeth and peepeth,  
     He palters and steals;  
 Infirm, melancholy,  
     Jealous glancing around,  
 An oaf, an accomplice, 55  
     He poisons the ground.

'Out spoke the great mother,  
     Beholding his fear;—  
 At the sound of her accents  
     Cold shuddered the sphere:— 60  
 "Who has drugged my boy's cup?  
     Who has mixed my boy's bread?  
 Who, with sadness and madness,  
     Has turned my child's head?" '

I heard a poet answer 65  
     Aloud and cheerfully,  
 'Say on, sweet Sphinx! thy dirges  
     Are pleasant songs to me.  
 Deep love lieth under  
     These pictures of time;  
 They fade in the light of 70  
     Their meaning sublime.

'The fiend that man harries  
     Is love of the Best;  
 Yawns the pit of the Dragon,<sup>4</sup> 75  
     Lit by rays from the Blest.<sup>5</sup>  
 The Lethe of Nature  
     Can't trance him again,  
 Whose soul sees the perfect,  
     Which his eyes seek in vain. 80

'To vision profounder  
     Man's spirit must dive;  
 His aye-rolling orb  
     At no goal will arrive;  
 The heavens that now draw him 85  
     With sweetness untold,  
 Once found,—for new heavens  
     He spurneth the old.

4. Where an angel chained "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil"; cf. Revelation xx: 1-3.

5. General term in hymnology and Scripture for God's heaven of redemption.

'Pride ruined the angels,  
 Their shame them restores;  
 And the joy that is sweetest  
 Lurks in stings of remorse.<sup>6</sup>  
 Have I a lover  
 Who is noble and free?—  
 I would he were nobler  
 Than to love me. 95

'Eterne alternation  
 Now follows, now flies;  
 And under pain, pleasure,—  
 Under pleasure, pain lies. 100  
 Love works at the centre,  
 Heart-heaving away;  
 Forth speed the strong pulses  
 To the borders of day.

'Dull Sphinx, Jove keep thy five wits: 105  
 Thy sight is growing blear;  
 Rue, myrrh and cummin<sup>7</sup> for the Sphinx,—  
 Her muddy eyes to clear!—  
 The old Sphinx bit her thick lip,—  
 Said, 'Who taught thee me to name? 110  
 I am thy spirit, yoke-fellow,  
 Of thine eye I am eyebeam.<sup>8</sup>

'Thou art the unanswered question;  
 Couldst see thy proper eye  
 Always it asketh, asketh; 115  
 And each answer is a lie.  
 So take thy quest through nature,  
 It through thousand natures ply;  
 Ask on, thou clothed eternity;  
 'Time is the false reply.' 120

Uprose the merry Sphinx,  
 And crouched no more in stone;  
 She melted into purple cloud,  
 She silvered in the moon;

6. Ll. 91–92 were changed in the posthumous Centenary Edition to read: "Lurks the joy that is sweetest / In stings of remorse."

7. In the ancient tradition of the herbalist, rue was medicine for remorse (*cf.* l. 92); myrrh was the Hebrew aromatic for anointment or purification,

brought to the infant Jesus by the Magi, and offered him upon the Cross (*cf.* ll. 76–80); cummin was a Palestinian spice, a relish for food (*cf.* ll. 99–104).

8. Thus the poet is the prophet of the riddle of the Sphinx or of nature. See *Nature*, Chapter I, paragraph 4: "I become a transparent eyeball."

She spired into a yellow flame; 125  
 She flowered in blossoms red;  
 She flowed into a foaming wave:  
 She stood Monadnoc's<sup>9</sup> head.

Thorough a thousand voices  
 Spoke the universal dame: 130  
 'Who telleth one of my meanings,  
 Is master of all I am.'

1841, 1847

## Compensation<sup>1</sup>

### I

The wings of Time are black and white,  
 Pied with morning and with night.  
 Mountain tall and ocean deep  
 Trembling balance duly keep.  
 In changing moon and tidal wave 5  
 Glows the feud of Want and Have.  
 Gauge of more and less through space,  
 Electric star or pencil plays,  
 The lonely Earth amid the balls  
 That hurry through the eternal halls, 10  
 A makeweight flying to the void,  
 Supplemental asteroid,  
 Or compensatory spark,  
 Shoots across the neutral Dark.

### II

Man's the elm, and Wealth the vine; 15  
 Stanch and strong the tendrils twine:  
 Though the frail ringlets thee deceive,  
 None from its stock that vine can reave.  
 Fear not, then, thou child infirm,  
 There's no god dare wrong a worm; 20  
 Laurel crowns cleave to deserts,  
 And power to him who power exerts.  
 Hast not thy share? On winged feet,  
 Lo! it rushes thee to meet;  
 And all that Nature made thy own, 25  
 Floating in air or pent in stone,

9. A peak that dominates the mountain scenery of southwest New Hampshire.

1. "Compensation" was Emerson's poetical motto for the essay of the same

name, published in *Essays* [First Series] (1841). Together with other such "Elements and Mottoes" it was collected in *May-Day and Other Pieces* (1867).

Will rive the hills, and swim the sea,  
And, like thy shadow, follow thee.<sup>2</sup>

1841, 1867

### Ode to Beauty<sup>3</sup>

Who gave thee, O Beauty,  
The keys of this breast,—  
Too credulous lover  
Of blest and unblest?  
Say, when in lapsed ages 5  
Thee knew I of old?  
Or what was the service  
For which I was sold?  
When first my eyes saw thee,  
I found me thy thrall, 10  
By magical drawings,  
Sweet tyrant of all!  
I drank at thy fountain  
False waters of thirst;  
Thou intimate stranger, 15  
Thou latest and first!  
Thy dangerous glances  
Make women of men;  
New-born, we are melting  
Into nature again. 20  
Lavish, lavish promiser,  
Nigh persuading gods to err!  
Guest of million painted forms,  
Which in turn thy glory warms!  
The frailest leaf, the mossy bark, 25  
The acorn's cup, the rain-drop's arc,  
The swinging spider's silver line,  
The ruby of the drop of wine,  
The shining pebble of the pond,  
Thou inscribest with a bond, 30  
In thy momentary play,  
Would bankrupt nature to repay.  
Ah, what avails it  
To hide or to shun

2. Ll. 23–28 are an enlarged paraphrase from “a noble sentence of Ali,” cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed (Centenary Edition, Vol. IX, p. 494).  
3. The “Ode to Beauty,” distinguished among Emerson’s poems for a lyric grace

that responds to feeling more than to idea, was published in *The Dial* for October, 1843. It was revised slightly for the *Poems* (1847), and finally, for the *Selected Poems* (1876), as given here.

Whom the Infinite One 35  
 Hath granted his throne?  
 The heaven high over  
 Is the deep's lover;  
 The sun and sea,  
 Informed by thee, 40  
 Before me run  
 And draw me on,  
 Yet fly me still,  
 As Fate refuses  
 To me the heart Fate for me chooses. 45  
 Is it that my opulent soul  
 Was mingled from the generous whole;  
 Sea-valleys and the deep of skies  
 Furnished several supplies;  
 And the sands whereof I'm made 50  
 Draw me to them, self-betrayed?  
 I turn the proud portfolio  
 Which holds the grand designs  
 Of Salvator, of Guercino,  
 And Piranesi's lines.<sup>4</sup> 55  
 I hear the lofty paeans  
 Of the masters of the shell,<sup>5</sup>  
 Who heard the starry music  
 And recount the numbers well;  
 Olympian bards who sung 60  
 Divine Ideas below,<sup>6</sup>  
 Which always find us young  
 And always keep us so.  
 Oft, in streets or humblest places,  
 I detect far-wandered graces, 65  
 Which, from Eden wide astray,  
 In lowly homes have lost their way.  
  
 Thee gliding through the sea of form,  
 Like the lightning through the storm,  
 Somewhat not to be possessed, 70  
 Somewhat not to be carressed,  
 No feet so fleet could ever find,

4. According to Emerson's editors (Centenary Edition, Vol. IX, p. 432), Margaret Fuller had sent him the "portfolio" (l. 52). Salvator Rosa (1615-1673) was leader of the Neapolitan revival of landscape painting; Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, 1591-1666) was a Bolognese Eclectic painter; Giambattista Piranesi (1720-1778), Italian architect and painter, influenced both neoclassical architects and later romantic

writers by his engravings of classical antiquity.

5. According to Greek myth, it was from a turtle shell that Apollo formed the lyre, instrument of the twin arts of music and poetry; hence poets are "masters of the shell."

6. The Greek gods, dwelling on Mount Olympus, heard daily the poetry of divine bards; Orpheus, a mortal, taught by Apollo, "sung / Divine Ideas below."

No perfect form could ever bind.  
 Thou eternal fugitive,  
 Hovering over all that live, 75  
 Quick and skilful to inspire  
 Sweet, extravagant desire,  
 Starry space and lily-bell  
 Filling with thy roscate smell,  
 Wilt not give the lips to taste 80  
 Of the nectar which thou hast.

All that's good and great with thee  
 Works in close conspiracy;  
 'Thou hast bribed the dark and lonely  
 'To report thy features only, 85  
 And the cold and purple morning  
 Itself with thoughts of thee adorning;  
 The leafy dell, the city mart,  
 Equal trophies of thine art;  
 E'en the flowing azure air 90  
 Thou hast touched for my despair;  
 And, if I languish into dreams,  
 Again I meet the ardent beams.  
 Queen of things! I dare not die  
 In Being's deeps past ear and eye; 95  
 Lest there I find the same deceiver  
 And be the sport of Fate forever.  
 Dread Power, but dear! if God thou be,  
 Unmake me quite, or give thyself to me!

1843, 1847

## Hamatreya<sup>7</sup>

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint,<sup>8</sup>  
 Possessed the land which rendered to their toil  
 Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wood.  
 Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,  
 Saying, ' 'T is mine, my children's and my name's. 5  
 How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!

7. In Emerson's journal (1845) appears a long passage from the Hindu *Vishnu Purana*. The gist of this poem is found in the following extract: "Kings who with perishable frames have possessed this ever-enduring world, and who \* \* \* have indulged the feeling that suggests 'This earth is mine,—it is my son's,—it belongs to my dynasty,'—have all passed away. \* \* \* Earth laughs, as if smiling with autumnal flowers to behold her kings unable to

effect the subjugation of themselves." The song of the Earth (on which Emerson based the "Earth-Song" in this poem) is then recited to Maitreya, but Emerson rejected that name for his title in favor of the variant "Hamatreya." The poem was published in the *Poems* (1847) and in the *Selected Poems* (1876), as here printed.

8. Names of first settlers of Concord, Massachusetts, including Peter Bulkeley, an ancestor of Emerson.

How graceful climb those shadows on my hill  
 I fancy these pure waters and the flags  
 Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;  
 And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil.' 10

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:  
 And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.  
 Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys  
 Earth proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;  
 Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet 15  
 Clear of the grave  
 They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,  
 And sighed for all that bounded their domain;  
 'This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;  
 We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge, 20  
 And misty lowland, where to go for peat.  
 The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.  
 'T is good, when you have crossed the sea and back,  
 To find the sitfast acres where you left them.'  
 Ah! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds 25  
 Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.  
 Hear what the Earth says:—

## EARTH-SONG

Mine and yours;  
 Mine, not yours.  
 Earth endures; 30  
 Stars abide—  
 Shine down in the old sea;  
 Old are the shores;  
 But where are old men?  
 I who have seen much, 35  
 Such have I never seen.

The lawyer's deed  
 Ran sure,  
 In tail,<sup>9</sup>  
 To them, and to their heirs 40  
 Who shall succeed,  
 Without fail,  
 Forevermore.

Here is the land,  
 Shaggy with wood, 45

9. *I.e.*, "entailed"; legal term applied to an estate irrevocably settled upon designated descendants.



With its old valley,  
Mound and flood.  
But the heritois?—  
Fled like the flood's foam.  
The lawyer, and the laws, 50  
And the kingdom,  
Clean swept herefrom.

They called me theirs,  
Who so controlled me;  
Yet every one 55  
Wished to stay, and is gone,  
How am I theirs,  
If they cannot hold me,  
But I hold them?

When I heard the Earth-song, 60  
I was no longer brave;  
My avarice cooled  
Like lust in the chill of the grave.

1847

### Give All to Love<sup>1</sup>

Give all to love;  
Obey thy heart;  
Friends, kindred, days,  
Estate, good-fame,  
Plans, credit and the Muse,— 5  
Nothing refuse.

'T is a brave master;  
Let it have scope:  
Follow it utterly,  
Hope beyond hope: 10  
High and more high  
It dives into noon.  
With wing unspent,  
Untold intent;  
But it is a god, 15  
Knows its own path  
And the outlets of the sky.

1. "Give All to Love" is puzzling to readers who have not understood Emerson's toughness of mind in pushing his ideas to their logical limits of social application. If his theory of individual-

ism is sound, it must function also between lovers. Thus he ends another poem, "The Initial Love": "So lovers melt their sundered selves, / Yet melted would be twain."

It was never for the mean;  
 It requircth courage stout.  
 Souls above doubt, 20  
 Valor unbending,  
 It will reward,—  
 They shall return  
 More than they were,  
 And ever ascending. 25  
 Leave all for love;  
 Yet, hear me, yet,  
 One word more thy heart behoved,  
 One pulse more of firm endeavor,—  
 Keep thee to-day, 30  
 To-morrow, forever,  
 Free as an Arab  
 Of thy beloved.  
 Cling with life to the maid;  
 But when the surprise, 35  
 First vague shadow of surmise  
 Flits across her bosom young,  
 Of a joy apart from thee,  
 Free be she, fancy-free;  
 Nor thou detain her vesture's hem, 40  
 Nor the palest rose she flung  
 From her summer diadem.  
 Though thou loved her as thyself,  
 As a self of purer clay,  
 Though her parting dims the day, 45  
 Stealing grace from all alive;  
 Heartily know,  
 When half-gods go,  
 The gods arrive.

1847

## Ode

INSCRIBED TO W. H. CHANNING<sup>2</sup>

Though loath to grieve  
 The evil time's sole patriot,

2. The so-called Channing Ode was published in the *Poems* (1847), in the midst of the Mexican War, which Emerson had opposed both on pacific grounds and because the war was presumably fomented to achieve the extension of slave terri-

tory. William Henry Channing (1810–1884) was a Unitarian clergyman and active transcendentalist. Whether or not he had urged Emerson to give concrete support to the mounting abolition movement, Channing was so fully identified

I cannot leave  
 My honied thought  
 For the priest's cant, 5  
 Or statesman's rant.

If I refuse  
 My study for their politique,  
 Which at the best is trick,  
 The angry Muse 10  
 Puts confusion in my brain.

But who is he that prates  
 Of the culture of mankind,  
 Of better arts and life?  
 Go, blindworm, go, 15  
 Behold the famous States  
 Harrying Mexico  
 With rifle and with knife!

Or who, with accent bolder,  
 Dare praise the freedom-loving mountaineer? 20  
 I found by thee, O rushing Contoocook!<sup>3</sup>  
 And in thy valleys, Agiochook!<sup>4</sup>  
 The jackals of the negro-holder.<sup>5</sup>

The God who made New Hampshire  
 Taunted the lofty land 25  
 With little men;—  
 Small bat and wren  
 House in the oak:—  
 If earth-fire cleave  
 The upheaved land, and bury the folk, 30  
 The southern crocodile would grieve.  
 Virtue palter; Right is hence;  
 Freedom praised, but hid;  
 Funeral eloquence  
 Rattles the coffin-lid. 35

What boots thy zeal,  
 O glowing friend,  
 That would indignant rend  
 The northland from the south?

with such humanitarian causes that the poet was justified in using his friend's name to establish his argument, which strikingly illustrates the application of his philosophy to social action.  
 3. A branch of the Merrimack River in New Hampshire.

4. Indian name for the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

5. *I.e.*, those who hounded escaped slaves under sanction of the fugitive-slave laws; the jackal is a mean and cowardly wild dog.

Wherefore? to what good end? 40  
 Boston Bay and Bunker Hill  
 Would serve things still;—  
 Things are of the snake.

The horseman serves the horse,  
 The neatherd serves the neat,<sup>6</sup> 45  
 The merchant serves the purse,  
 The eater serves his meat;  
 'T is the day of the chattel,  
 Web to weave, and corn to grind;  
 Things are in the saddle, 50  
 And ride mankind.

There are two laws discrete,  
 Not reconciled,—  
 Law for man, and law for things;  
 The last builds town and fleet, 55  
 But it runs wild,  
 And doth the man unking.

'T is fit the forest fall,  
 The steep be graded,  
 The mountain tunnelled, 60  
 The sand shaded,  
 The orchard planted,  
 The glebe tilled,  
 The prairie granted,  
 The steamer built. 65

Let man serve law for man;  
 Live for friendship, live for love,  
 For truth's and harmony's behoof;  
 The state may follow how it can,  
 As Olympus follows Jove.<sup>7</sup> 70

Yet do not I implore  
 The wrinkled shopman to my sounding woods,  
 Nor bid the unwilling senator  
 Ask votes of thrushes in the solitudes.  
 Every one to his chosen work;— 75  
 Foolish hands may mix and mar;  
 Wise and sure the issues are.  
 Round they roll till dark is light,  
 Sex to sex, and even to odd;—

6. Obsolete term for oxen.

7. Jove (Jupiter, or Zeus) was the father-god of the Greek deities on Olympus.

The over-god 80  
 Who marries Right to Might,  
 Who peoples, unpeoples,—  
 He who exterminates  
 Races by stronger races,  
 Black by white faces,— 85  
 Knows to bring honey  
 Out of the lion;<sup>8</sup>  
 Grafts gentlest scion  
 On pirate and Turk.  
  
 The Cossack eats Poland,<sup>9</sup> 90  
 Like stolen fruit;  
 Her last noble is ruined,  
 Her last poet mute:  
 Straight, into double band  
 The victors divide; 95  
 Half for freedom strike and stand;—  
 The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side.  
1847

Fable<sup>1</sup>

The mountain and the squirrel  
 Had a quarrel,  
 And the former called the latter "Little Prig;"  
 Bun replied,  
 "You are doubtless very big; 5  
 But all sorts of things and weather  
 Must be taken in together,  
 To make up a year  
 And a sphere.  
 And I think it no disgrace 10  
 To occupy my place.  
 If I'm not so large as you,  
 You are not so small as I,  
 And not half so spry.  
 I'll not deny you make 15  
 A very pretty squirrel track;  
 Talents differ; all is well and wisely put;

8. Cf. Samson's exploit (Judges xiv: 9).  
 9. In spite of the Russian military despotism in Poland after the popular insurrections of 1830-1831, a new Polish generation was striking for liberty in

1846 (cf. ll. 94-96).

1. "Fable" first appeared in *The Diadem* in 1846, and was collected in the volumes of 1847 and 1876.

If I cannot carry forests on my back,  
Neither can you crack a nut."

1845

1846, 1847

Brahma<sup>2</sup>

If the red slayer think he slays,  
Or if the slain think he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

5

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly, I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

10

The strong gods pine for my abode,  
And pine in vain the sacred Seven,<sup>3</sup>  
But thou, meek lover of the good!  
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

15

1856

1857, 1867

Days<sup>4</sup>

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,  
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,  
And marching single in an endless file,  
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.  
To each they offer gifts after his will,  
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.

5

2. Brahma is the Hindu supreme soul of the universe—an uncreated, illimitable, and timeless essence or being. Emerson, discussing with his daughter the perplexity into which his poem had thrown many, said "Tell them to say Jehovah instead of Brahma." The poem is an exposition of the erroneous relativity of human and temporal perception, as compared with the sublime harmony of cosmic divinity. The images of the poem are presumably based on certain extracts in Emerson's *Journals* from the *Vishnu Purana*, extensively discussed in the

Centenary Edition (Vol. IX, pp. 464-467). "Brahma" was one of four poems by Emerson in the first number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1857; it then took its place in the volumes of 1867 and 1876.

3. The seven high saints of the Brahmin faith.

4. One of the most perfect of Emerson's lyrics, "Days" appeared with "Brahma" in the *Atlantic Monthly* for November, 1857, and in the volumes of 1867 and 1876.

I, in my pleached garden,<sup>4</sup> watched the pomp,  
 Forgot my morning wishes, hastily  
 Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day  
 Turned and departed silent. I, too late, 10  
 Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

1857, 1867

### Waldeinsamkeit<sup>5</sup>

I do not count the hours I spend  
 In wandering by the sea;  
 The forest is my loyal friend,  
 Like God it useth me.

In plains that room for shadows make 5  
 Of skirting hills to lie,  
 Bound in by streams which give and take  
 Their colors from the sky;

Or on the mountain-crest sublime,  
 Or down the oaken glade, 10  
 O what have I to do with time?  
 For this the day was made.

Cities of mortals woe-begone  
 Fantastic care derides,  
 But in the serious landscape lone 15  
 Stern benefit abides.

Sheen will tarnish, honey cloy,  
 And merry is only a mask of sad,  
 But, sober on a fund of joy,  
 The woods at heart are glad. 20

There the great Planter plants  
 Of fruitful worlds the grain,  
 And with a million spells enchants  
 The souls that walk in pain.

Still on the seeds of all he made 25  
 The rose of beauty burns;  
 Through times that wear and forms that fade,  
 Immortal youth returns.

4. In which the branches of trees or shrubs are interwoven ("pleached"), making them flat: hence formal, artificial.

5. Emerson's son and editor translated this German title as "Forest Solitude," and associated it with the woods of Walden, Thoreau's hermitage.

The black ducks mounting from the lake,  
 The pigeon in the pines, 30  
 The bittern's boom, a desert make  
 Which no false art refines.

Down in yon watery nook,  
 Where bearded mists divide,  
 The gray old gods whom Chaos knew, 35  
 The sires of Nature, hide.

Aloft, in secret veins of air,  
 Blows the sweet breath of song,  
 O, few to scale those uplands dare,  
 Though they to all belong! 40

See thou bring not to field or stone  
 The fancies found in books;  
 Leave authors' eyes, and fetch your own,  
 To brave the landscape's looks.

Oblivion here thy wisdom is, 45  
 Thy thrift, the sleep of cares;  
 For a proud idleness like this  
 Crowns all thy mean affairs.

1858, 1867

### Terminus<sup>6</sup>

It is time to be old,  
 To take in sail:—  
 The god of bounds,  
 Who sets to seas a shore,  
 Came to me in his fatal rounds, 5  
 And said: 'No more!  
 No farther shoot  
 Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root,  
 Fancy departs: no more invent,  
 Contract thy firmament 10  
 To compass of a tent.  
 There's not enough for this and that,  
 Make thy option which of two;  
 Economize the failing river,  
 Nor the less revere the Giver, 15

6. Terminus was the Roman deity of boundaries; the poem, of course, has autobiographical significance. It ap-

peared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1867, and the same year in the *May-Day* volume.



Leave the many and hold the few.  
 Timely wise accept the terms,  
 Soften the fall with wary foot;  
 A little while  
 Still plan and smile, 20  
 And, fault of novel germs,  
 Mature the unfallen fruit.  
 Curse, if thou wilt, thy sirces,  
 Bad husbands of their fires,  
 Who, when they gave thee breath, 25  
 Failed to bequeath  
 The needful sinew stark as once,  
 The Baresark<sup>7</sup> marrow to thy bones,  
 But left a legacy of ebbing veins,  
 Inconstant heat and nerveless reins,— 30  
 Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,  
 Amid the gladiators, halt and numb.<sup>7</sup>

As the bird trims her to the gale,  
 I trim myself to the storm of time,  
 I man the rudder, reef the sail, 35  
 Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:  
 'Lowly faithful, banish fear,  
 Right onward drive unharmed;  
 The port well worth the cruise, is near,  
 And every wave is charmed.' 40

1867

7. *I.e.*, berserk ("bare of shirt"); said of the ancient Germanic warriors who fought without armor.

## HENRY DAVID THOREAU

(1817–1862)

Thoreau died at forty-four, having published relatively little of what he had written. He expressed his characteristic dilemma when he declared: "My life has been the poem I would have writ, / But I could not both live and utter it." At his best, perhaps he succeeded in doing just that.

Thoreau's outward life reflected his inward stature as a

small and quiet pond reflects the diminished outline of a mountain. Concord, the place where he lived and died, was tiny, but it was the center of an exciting intellectual world, and the poverty of his family did not prevent him from getting a good start in the classics at the local academy. At Harvard College in Cambridge, a few miles away, he maintained himself frugally with the help of

his aunts, and by doing chores and teaching during leisure hours and vacations. There he began his *Journals*, ultimately to become the largest of his works, a storehouse of his observations and ideas. Upon graduation he tried teaching, and for a time conducted a private school in Concord with his brother, John; but he had no inclination toward a career in the ordinary sense. Living was the object of life, and work was never an end in itself, but merely the self-respecting means by which one paid his way in the world. While he made his home with his father, he assisted him in his trade of pencil maker, but he lost interest as soon as they had learned to make the best pencil to be had. When he lived with Emerson (1841-1843 and 1847-1848) he did the chores, and he kept the house while Emerson was abroad. At the home of Emerson's brother William on Staten Island, in 1843, he tutored the children. In Concord village, he did odd jobs, hired himself out, and surveyed other men's lands without coveting them.

Meanwhile, his inward life, as recorded in the *Journals*, was vastly enriched by experience and steady reading. In the year of his graduation from Harvard (1837), his Concord neighbor, Emerson, made his address on *The American Scholar*, and both the man and the essay became Thoreau's early guide. The next year he delivered his first lecture, at the Concord Lyceum; he later gave lectures from Bangor, Maine, to Philadelphia, but never acquired Emerson's skill in communicating to his audience.

On his journeys he made friends as various as Orestes Brownson, Horace Greeley, John Brown, and Walt Whitman; he and Emerson were the two who recognized Whitman's genius from the beginning. At home in Concord he attended Alcott's "conversations," and shared the intellectual excitements and stimulation of the informal Transcendental Club which met at Concord and Boston. The Club sponsored *The Dial* (1840-1844), to which he contributed essays drawn from his *Journals* and his study of natural history and philosophy.

A number of his best poems also appeared in *The Dial*, and the bulk of his poetry was written in the earlier years. Although Emerson overshot the mark in declaring that "his biography is in his verses," it is true that the same lyrical response to ideas pervades his poetry, his prose, and his life. Thoreau tacitly recognized this by incorporating much of his poetry in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) and *Walden* (1854), the two volumes which were published before his death. But it is a mistake to suppose that the serene individualism of his writings reflects only an unbroken serenity of life. Many Massachusetts neighbors, and even some transcendentalists, regarded Thoreau as an extremist, especially on public and economic issues. There were painful clashes of temperament with Emerson. In his personal life he suffered deep bereavements. His older brother, John, who was also his best friend, revealed his love for the girl whom Henry hoped to

marry, and Ellen Sewall refused them both. Two years later, John died at twenty-seven, first victim of the family frailty which removed the beloved sister Helen at thirty-six, and caused Thoreau's death, after seven years of tuberculosis, at the age of forty-four.

Two aspects of Thoreau's life provided the bulk of his literary materials: his active concern with social issues and his feeling for the unity of man and nature. He took an early interest in abolition, appearing as speaker at anti-slavery conventions, once in company with John Brown, whom he later publicly defended after the terrifying and bloody raid at Harpers Ferry. (See "Slavery in Massachusetts," 1854, and "A Plea for John Brown," 1859.) He was able also to associate his private rebellion with large social issues, as in his resistance to taxation. He refused to pay the church taxes (1838) because they were levied on all alike, as for an "established" church. In his refusal to pay the poll tax, which cost him a jail sentence (1845), he was resisting the "constitutional" concept which led Massachusetts to give support in Congress to southern leadership, as represented by the Mexican War and repugnant laws concerning slave "property." Four years later he formalized his theory of social action in the essay "Civil Disobedience," the origin of the modern concept of pacific resistance as the final instrument of minority opinion, which found its spectacular demonstration in the life of Mahatma Gandhi of India.

Thoreau's works at all points

reveal his economic and social individualism, but until recently his readers responded chiefly to his accurate and sympathetic reporting of nature, his interesting use of the stored learning of the past, and the wit, grace, and power of his style. His description of nature was based on his journals of his various "excursions," as he called them. A *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, his first published volume, described a canoe trip with his brother John in 1839. Other trips of literary significance were his explorations of the Penobscot forests of Maine (1846, 1853, and 1857), and his walking tours on Cape Cod (1849, 1850, 1855, and 1857) and in Canada. Certain essays on these adventures were published in magazines before his death; later his friends published *Cape Cod* (1865), *The Maine Woods* (1864), and *A Yankee in Canada* (1866), which resulted from a trip to Canada with W. E. Channing in 1850.

In his revelation of the simplicity and divine unity of nature, in his faith in man, in his own sturdy individualism, in his deep-rooted love for one place as an epitome of the universe, Thoreau reminds us of what we are and what we yet may be.

Posthumously collected volumes of Thoreau, in addition to those mentioned in the text, were *Excursions*, 1863, *Early Spring in Massachusetts*, 1881, *Summer*, 1884, *Winter*, 1888, *Autumn*, 1892, and *Poems of Nature*, 1895. A recent critical edition of the poems is *Collected Poems*, edited by Carl Bode, 1943.

The Riverside Edition, 10 vols., 1894, is superseded by the Manuscript Edition and the standard Walden Edition (from the same plates), *The Writings* \* \* \*, 20 vols., 1906. Let-

ters are in *Familiar Letters* \* \* \* , 1894, included as Vol. VI of the Walden Edition. *The Journals* (1837-1861), edited by Bradford Torrey, available as Vols. VII-XX of the Walden Edition, were newly edited by Francis H. Allen, 1949. *Consciousness in Concord: Thoreau's Lost Journal (1840-41)*, was published by Perry Miller, 1958. *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals* was edited by Odell Shepard, 1927. An available modern collection is *The Works of Thoreau*, Cambridge Edition, edited by H. S. Canby, 1947; standard selections are *Henry David Thoreau: Representative Selections*, edited by B. V. Crawford, 1934. C. Hode and W. Harding edited *The Correspondence* \* \* \* , 1958.

Standard biographies of Thoreau are

those of F. B. Sanborn, 1882, H. S. Salt, 1896, and Mark Van Doren, 1916. Recent scholarship and criticism is reflected in J. B. Atkinson, *Henry Thoreau, the Cosmic Yankee*, 1927; H. S. Canby, *Thoreau*, 1939; J. W. Krutch, *Henry David Thoreau*, 1948; R. L. Cook, *Passage to Walden*, 1949; H. B. Hough, *Thoreau of Walden*, 1956; S. Paul, *The Shores of America*, 1958; W. Harding, *Thoreau: A Century of Criticism*, 1954, and the *Thoreau Handbook*, 1959.

In the present edition, the prose texts are those of the first appearance in a volume, unless otherwise noted; the poems represent a collation of *Poems of Nature*, with the excerpts in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *Walden*.

## From A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

### [Nature, Poetry, and the Poet]<sup>1</sup>

If one doubts whether Grecian valor and patriotism are not a fiction of the poets, he may go to Athens and see still upon the walls of the temple of Minerva<sup>2</sup> the circular marks made by the shields taken from the enemy in the Persian war, which were suspended there. We have not far to seek for living and unquestionable evidence. The very dust takes shape and confirms some story which we had read. As Fuller said, commenting on the zeal of Camden,<sup>3</sup> "A broken urn is a whole evidence; or an old gate still surviving out of which the city is run out." When Solon<sup>4</sup> endeavored to prove that Salamis had formerly belonged to the Athenians, and not to the Megareans, he caused the tombs to be opened, and showed that the inhabitants of Salamis turned the faces of their dead to the same side with the Athenians, but the Megareans to the opposite side. There they were to be interrogated.

1. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) was Thoreau's first book, the miscellany of an already learned young poet and meditative thinker. While describing his "fluvial excursions" with his brother, John, on these rivers in 1839, he makes observant comments on nature, man, society, and literature, occasionally introducing a poem of his own. *Walden* has a more finished style, but *A Week* \* \* \* is distinguished among Thoreau's works for its unique morning-charm, as whimsical as the naming of chapters for days of the week. The scattered passages here assembled express a theory of art and poetry, transcendental in nature, which Thoreau consistently supported. A number of the poems of *A Week* \* \* \* are

also reprinted below, as noted.

2. Known to the Greeks as Athena, goddess of wisdom, protectress of Athens, to whom were dedicated the spoils of battle, as here mentioned.

3. Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), churchman and writer, in his famous *History of the Worthies of England*, praised William Camden (1551-1623), a learned schoolmaster whose history, *Britannia*, treated British antiquities; but Thoreau, as he says in the following paragraphs, would rather draw the poet's attention to the antiquities of nature.

4. Greek statesman (638?-559? B.C.), called "the lawgiver," who made his advent as one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece by this recovery of Salamis.

Some minds are as little logical or argumentative as nature; they can offer no reason or "guess," but they exhibit the solemn and incontrovertible fact. If a historical question arises, they cause the tombs to be opened. Their silent and practical logic convinces the reason and the understanding at the same time. Of such sort is always the only pertinent question and the only unanswerable reply.

Our own country furnishes antiquities as ancient and durable, and as useful, as any; rocks at least as well covered with moss, and a soil which if it is virgin, is but virgin mould, the very dust of nature. What if we cannot read Rome, or Greece, Etruria, or Carthage, or Egypt, or Babylon, on these; are our cliffs bare? The lichen on the rocks is a rude and simple shield which beginning and imperfect Nature suspended there. Still hangs her wrinkled trophy. And here too the poet's eye may still detect the brazen nails which fastened Time's inscriptions, and if he has the gift, decipher them by this clue. The walls that fence our fields, as well as modern Rome, and not less the Parthenon itself, are all built of *ruins*. Here may be heard the din of rivers, and ancient winds which have long since lost their names sough through our woods;—the first faint sounds of spring, older than the summer of Athenian glory, the titmouse lisping in the wood, the jay's scream, and blue-bird's warble, and the hum of

"bees that fly

About the laughing blossoms of willow."

Here is the gray dawn for antiquity, and our to-morrow's future should be at least paulo-post<sup>5</sup> to theirs which we have put behind us. There are the red-maple and birchen leaves, old runes which are not yet deciphered; catkins, pine-cones, vines, oak-leaves, and acorns; the very things themselves, and not their forms in stone,—so much the more ancient and venerable. And even to the current summer there has come down tradition of a hoary-headed master of all art, who once filled every field and grove with statues and god-like architecture, of every design which Greece has lately copied; whose ruins are now mingled with the dust, and not one block remains upon another. The century sun and unwearied rain have wasted them, till not one fragment from that quarry now exists; and poets perchance will feign that gods sent down the material from heaven. \* \* \*

Poetry is the mysticism of mankind.

The expressions of the poet cannot be analyzed; his sentence is one word, whose syllables are words. There are indeed no *words* quite worthy to be set to his music. But what matter if we do not hear the words always, if we hear the music?

Much verse fails of being poetry because it was not written exactly

5. Latin, "a little bit afterward"; hence, "at the least interval succeeding to theirs."

at the right crisis, though it may have been inconceivably near to it. It is only by a miracle that poetry is written at all. It is not recoverable thought, but a hue caught from a vaster receding thought.

A poem is one undivided, unimpeded expression fallen ripe into literature, and it is undividedly and unimpededly received by those for whom it was matured.

If you can speak what you will never hear,—if you can write what you will never read, you have done rare things.

There are two classes of men called poets. The one cultivates life, the other art,—one seeks food for nutriment, the other for flavor; one satisfies hunger, the other gratifies the palate. There are two kinds of writing, both great and rare; one that of genius, or the inspired, the other of intellect and taste, in the intervals of inspiration. The former is above criticism, always correct, giving the law to criticism. It vibrates and pulsates with life forever. It is sacred, and to be read with reverence, as the works of nature are studied. There are few instances of a sustained style of this kind; perhaps every man has spoken words, but the speaker is then careless of the record. Such a style removes us out of personal relations with its author, we do not take his words on our lips, but his sense into our hearts. It is the stream of inspiration, which bubbles out, now here, now there, now in this man, now in that. It matters not through what ice-crystals it is seen, now a fountain, now the ocean stream running under ground. It is in Shakspeare, Alpheus, in Burns, Arethuse;<sup>6</sup> but ever the same.—The other is self-possessed and wise. It is reverent of genius, and greedy of inspiration. It is conscious in the highest and the least degree. It consists with the most perfect command of the faculties. It dwells in a repose as of the desert, and objects are as distinct in it as oases or palms in the horizon of sand. The train of thought moves with subdued and measured step, like a caravan. But the pen is only an instrument in its hand, and not instinct with life, like a longer arm. It leaves a thin varnish or glaze over all its work. The works of Goethe furnish remarkable instances of the latter.

There is no just and serene criticism as yet. Nothing is considered simply as it lies in the lap of eternal beauty, but our thoughts, as well as our bodies, must be dressed after the latest fashions. Our taste is too delicate and particular. It says nay to the poet's work, but never yea to his hope. It invites him to adorn his deformities, and not to cast them off by expansion, as the tree its bark. We are a people who live in a bright light, in houses of pearl and porcelain, and drink only light wines, whose teeth are easily set on edge by the least natural sour. If we had been consulted, the backbone of the earth would have

6. Alpheus, fabled god of a Greek river, pursued the nymph Arethusa, who was changed into a Sicilian fountain; but

Alpheus followed her undersea in order to mingle their waters (see Thoreau's previous sentence).

been made, not of granite, but of Bristol spar.<sup>7</sup> A modern author would have died in infancy in a ruder age. But the poet is something more than a scald,<sup>8</sup> "a smoother and polisher of language;" he is a Cincinnatus<sup>9</sup> in literature, and occupies no west end of the world. Like the sun, he will indifferently select his rhymes, and with a liberal taste weave into his verse the planet and the stubble.

In these old books the stucco has long since crumbled away, and we read what was sculptured in the granite. They are rude and massive in their proportions, rather than smooth and delicate in their finish. The workers in stone polish only their chimney ornaments, but their pyramids are roughly done. There is a soberness in a rough aspect, as of unhewn granite, which addresses a depth in us, but a polished surface hits only the ball of the eye. The true finish is the work of time and the use to which a thing is put. The elements are still polishing the pyramids. Art may varnish and gild, but it can do no more. A work of genius is rough-hewn from the first, because it anticipates the lapse of time, and has an ingrained polish, which still appears when fragments are broken off, an essential quality of its substance. Its beauty is at the same time its strength, and it breaks with a lustre.

1839

1849

## From Walden<sup>1</sup>

### I. Economy

When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond,<sup>2</sup> in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived

7. The spars are lustrous rocks, readily broken; granite, though less eye-catching, is hard and durable.

8. The ancient Norse *skald* generally recited poems already traditional.

9. Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus (519-439? B.C.), legendary symbol of virtuous power, was twice appointed dictator of Rome in military crises, and promptly defeating his country's enemies, resigned his powers in favor of his farm.

1. The earliest manuscript of this famous book, entitled "Walden, or Life in the Woods," was prepared, as Thoreau there states, "about 1846." It was later much revised in the preparation of portions for reading at meetings of the Concord Lyceum, and for the publication of the volume in 1854. The present text is based on this 1854 edition. Of the selections below, Chapter I is Thoreau's analysis of the economy of

individualism and the details of the experiment at Walden Pond, by which he sought to test his theories; Chapter II discusses the values which a free individual may win by self-reliance in society or solitude; and Chapter XVIII, the "Conclusion," summarizes Thoreau's transcendental concept of the human personality, of man's relations with the Timeless rather than with Time, and other ideas which have been suggested in chapters which, from considerations of space, have been omitted.

2. Thoreau later describes Walden Pond as half a mile wide and located about a mile and a half south of Concord, in a large wood between Concord and Lincoln. He resided there from July 4, 1845 until September 6, 1847, building his house on land belonging to Emerson, on the north shore.

there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again.

I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life, which some would call impertinent, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent, but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent. Some have asked what I got to eat; if I did not feel lonesome; if I was not afraid; and the like. Others have been curious to learn what portion of my income I devoted to charitable purposes; and some, who have large families, how many poor children I maintained. I will therefore ask those of my readers who feel no particular interest in me to pardon me if I undertake to answer some of these questions in this book. In most books, the *I*, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me. Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students. As for the rest of my readers, they will accept such portions as apply to them. I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits.

I would fain say something, not so much concerning the Chinese and Sandwich Islanders as you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops, and offices, and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways. What I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders "until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach;" or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars,—even these forms of conscious penance are



hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. The twelve labors of Hercules<sup>3</sup> were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolaus to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydra's head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed,<sup>4</sup> and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood-lot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

But men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon plowed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal.<sup>5</sup> It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before. It is said that Deucalion and Pyrrha created men by throwing stones over their heads behind them:—<sup>6</sup>

Inde genus durum sumus, experiensque laborum,  
Et documenta damus quâ simus origine nati.

Or, as Raleigh rhymes it in his sonorous way,—

"From thence our kind hard-hearted is, enduring pain and care,  
Approving that our bodies of a stony nature are."

3. The fabulous strong man of the Greeks, the son of Jupiter by a mortal. The goddess Juno, jealous, set him the almost impossible "twelve labors." Iolaus, as here mentioned, helped him to subdue the hydra; another of his tasks was to cleanse the Augean stables, mentioned in the following paragraph.

4. The stables of Augeus had housed three thousand oxen for thirty years, but Hercules cleansed them in one day by

turning the course of a river through the stalls.

5. Matthew vi: 19-20.

6. This story of the creation occurs in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book I. The Latin lines 414-415 are well represented in the English translation of Raleigh, an Elizabethan whom Thoreau praised as poet and man of action in "Sir Walter Raleigh," an essay.

So much for a blind obedience to a blundering oracle, throwing the stones over their heads behind them, and not seeing where they fell.

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that. Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relations to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance—which his growth requires—who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials, before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.

Some of you, we all know, are poor, find it hard to live, are sometimes, as it were, gasping for breath. I have no doubt that some of you who read this book are unable to pay for all the dinners which you have actually eaten, or for the coats and shoes which are fast wearing or are already worn out, and have come to this page to spend borrowed or stolen time, robbing your creditors of an hour. It is very evident what mean and sneaking lives many of you live, for my sight has been whetted by experience; always on the limits, trying to get into business and trying to get out of debt, a very ancient slough, called by the Latins *aes alienum*,<sup>7</sup> another's brass, for some of their coins were made of brass; still living, and dying, and buried by this other's brass; always promising to pay, promising to pay, to-morrow, and dying to-day, insolvent; seeking to curry favor, to get custom, by how many modes, only not state-prison offences; lying, flattering, voting, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility or dilating into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous gencrosity, that you may persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes, or his hat, or his coat, or his carriage, or import his groceries for him; making yourselves sick, that you may lay up something against a sick day, something to be tucked away in an old chest, or in a stocking behind the plastering, or, more safely, in the brick bank; no matter where, no matter how much or how little.

I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous, I may almost say, as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both North and South. It is hard to have a Southern overseer; it is worse to have a Northern one; but worst of all when you:

7. Latin *aes*, "bronze" (brass) or "cop-per," signified also metal coinage or money; hence *aes alienum*, "another's money," meant "debt."

are the slave-driver of yourself. Talk of a divinity in man! Look at the teamster on the highway, wending to market by day or night; does any divinity stir within him?<sup>8</sup> His highest duty to fodder and water his horses! What is his destiny to him compared with the shipping interests? Does not he drive for Squire Make-a-stir? How godlike, how immortal, is he? See how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely all the day he fears, not being immortal nor divine, but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate. Self-emancipation even in the West Indian provinces of the fancy and imagination,—what Wilberforce<sup>9</sup> is there to bring that about? Think, also, of the ladies of the land weaving toilet cushions against the last day, not to betray too green an interest in their fates! As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man,<sup>1</sup> and what are the true necessities and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be falsehood to-morrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields. What old people say you cannot do, you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new. Old people did not know enough once, perchance, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire a-going; new people put a little dry wood under a pot, and are whirled round the globe with the speed of birds, in a way to kill old people, as the phrase is. Age

8. A leading tenet of transcendentalism, but he may also have remembered Joseph Addison's *Cato*, Act V, Scene 1: "'Tis the divinity that stirs within us"; this divinity was seemingly defeated by economic hardships and slaveholding in Massachusetts (see *Journals*, Vol. VIII, p. 175 and Vol. XII, pp. 313, 355-8).  
9. William Wilberforce (1759-1833),

British parliamentarian, was a prominent leader in the British abolition movement which secured laws abolishing the slave trade (1807) and emancipating the slaves in British territories (1833).

1. In the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, the response to this question is: "To glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young, their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures, for private reasons, as they must believe; and it may be that they have some faith left which belies that experience, and they are only less young than they were. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have any experience which I think valuable, I am sure to reflect that this my Mentors said nothing about. \* \* \*

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line. You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint "No Admittance" on my gate.

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtledove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves.

To anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely, but, if possible, Nature herself! How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any neighbor was stirring about his business, have I been about mine! No doubt, many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it.

So many autumn, ay, and winter days, spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express! I well-nigh sunk all my capital in it, and lost my own breath into the bargain, running in the face of it. If it had concerned either of the political parties, depend upon it, it would have appeared in the Gazette with the earliest intelligence. At other times watching from the observatory of some cliff or tree, to telegraph any new arrival;

or waiting at evening on the hill-tops for the sky to fall, that I might catch something, though I never caught much, and that, manna-wise, would dissolve again in the sun.

For a long time I was reporter to a journal,<sup>4</sup> of no very wide circulation, whose editor has never yet seen fit to print the bulk of my contributions, and, as it is too common with writers, I got only my labor for my pains. However, in this case my pains were their own reward.

For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms, and did my duty faithfully; surveyor, if not of highways, then of forest paths and all across-lot routes, keeping them open, and ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to their utility.

I have looked after the wild stock of the town, which give a faithful herdsman a good deal of trouble by leaping fences; and I have had an eye to the unfrequented nooks and corners of the farm; though I did not always know whether Jonas or Solomon worked in a particular field to-day; that was none of my business. I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand cherry and the nettle tree, the red pine and the black ash, the white grape and the yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons.

In short, I went on thus for a long time (I may say it without boasting), faithfully minding my business, till it became more and more evident that my townsmen would not after all admit me into the list of town officers, nor make my place a sinecure with a moderate allowance. My accounts, which I can swear to have kept faithfully, I have, indeed, never got audited, still less accepted, still less paid and settled. However, I have not set my heart on that. \* \* \*

Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up. The ice in the pond was not yet dissolved, though there were some open spaces, and it was all dark colored and saturated with water. There were some slight flurries of snow during the days that I worked there; but for the most part when I came out on to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand

4. Probably a reference to his extensive *Journals*, not to be published until 1906; but the circumstances also fit *The Dial* and other magazines which occasionally published his writing.

heap stretched away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere, and the rails shone in the spring sun, and I heard the lark and pewee and other birds already come to commence another year with us. They were pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent<sup>7</sup> was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began to stretch itself. One day, when my axe had come off and I had cut a green hickory for a wedge, driving it with a stone, and had placed the whole to soak in a pond hole in order to swell the wood, I saw a striped snake run into the water, and he lay on the bottom, apparently without inconvenience, as long as I staid there, or more than a quarter of an hour; perhaps because he had not yet fairly come out of the torpid state. It appeared to me that for a like reason men remain in their present low and primitive condition; but if they should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher and more ethereal life. I had previously seen the snakes in frosty mornings in my path with portions of their bodies still numb and inflexible, waiting for the sun to thaw them. On the 1st of April it rained and melted the ice, and in the early part of the day, which was very foggy, I heard a stray goose groping about over the pond and cackling as if lost, or like the spirit of the fog.

So I went on for some days cutting and hewing timber, and also studs and rafters, all with my narrow axe, not having many communicable or scholar-like thoughts, singing to myself,—

Men say they know many things;  
But lo! they have taken wings,—  
The arts and sciences,  
And a thousand appliances;  
The wind that blows  
Is all that any body knows.

I hewed the main timbers six inches square, most of the studs on two sides only, and the rafters and floor timbers on one side, leaving the rest of the bark on, so that they were just as straight and much stronger than sawed ones. Each stick was carefully mortised or tenoned by its stump, for I had borrowed other tools by this time. My days in the woods were not very long ones; yet I usually carried my dinner of bread and butter, and read the newspaper in which it was wrapped, at noon, sitting amid the green pine boughs which I had cut off, and to my bread was imparted some of their fragrance, for my hands were covered with a thick coat of pitch. Before I had done I was more the friend than the foe of the pine tree, though I had cut down some of them, having become better acquainted with it.

7. Cf. Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act I, Scene 1, l. 1: "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer \* \* \*"

Sometimes a rambler in the wood was attracted by the sound of my axe, and we chatted pleasantly over the chips which I had made.

By the middle of April, for I made no haste in my work, but rather made the most of it, my house was framed and ready for the raising. I had already bought the shanty of James Collins, an Irishman who worked on the Fitchburg Railroad, for boards. James Collins' shanty was considered an uncommonly fine one. When I called to see it he was not at home. I walked about the outside, at first unobserved from within, the window was so deep and high. It was of small dimensions, with a peaked cottage roof, and not much else to be seen, the dirt being raised five feet all around as if it were a compost heap. The roof was the soundest part, though a good deal warped and made brittle by the sun. Doorsill there was none, but a perennial passage for the hens under the door board. Mrs. C. came to the door and asked me to view it from the inside. The hens were driven in by my approach. It was dark, and had a dirt floor for the most part, dank, clammy, and aguish, only here a board and there a board which would not bear removal. She lighted a lamp to show me the inside of the roof and the walls, and also that the board floor extended under the bed, warning me not to step into the cellar, a sort of dust hole two feet deep. In her own words, they were "good boards overhead, good boards all around, and a good window,"—of two whole squares originally, only the cat had passed out that way lately. There was a stove, a bed, and a place to sit, an infant in the house where it was born, a silk parasol, gilt-framed looking-glass, and a patent new coffee mill nailed to an oak sapling, all told. The bargain was soon concluded, for James had in the mean while returned. I to pay four dollars and twenty-five cents to-night, he to vacate at five to-morrow morning, selling to nobody else meanwhile; I to take possession at six. It were well, he said, to be there early, and anticipate certain indistinct but wholly unjust claims on the score of ground rent and fuel. This he assured me was the only encumbrance. At six I passed him and his family on the road. One large bundle held their all,—bed, coffee-mill, looking-glass, hens,—all but the cat, she took to the woods and became a wild cat, and, as I learned afterward, trod in a trap set for woodchucks, and so became a dead cat at last.

I took down this dwelling the same morning, drawing the nails, and removed it to the pond side by small cartloads, spreading the boards on the grass there to bleach and warp back again in the sun. One early thrush gave me a note or two as I drove along the woodland path. I was informed treacherously by a young Patrick that neighbor Seeley, an Irishman, in the intervals of the carting, transferred the still tolerable, straight, and drivable nails, staples, and spikes to his pocket, and then stood when I came back to pass the

time of day, and look freshly up, unconcerned, with spring thoughts, at the devastation; there being a dearth of work, as he said. He was there to represent spectatordom, and help make this seemingly insignificant event one with the removal of the gods of Troy.<sup>8</sup>

I dug my cellar in the side of a hill sloping to the south, where a woodchuck had formerly dug his burrow, down through sumach and blackberry roots, and the lowest stain of vegetation, six feet square by seven deep, to a fine sand where potatoes would not freeze in any winter. The sides were left shelving, and not stoned; but the sun having never shone on them, the sand still keeps its place. It was but two hours' work. I took particular pleasure in this breaking of ground, for in almost all latitudes men dig into the earth for an equable temperature. Under the most splendid house in the city is still to be found the cellar where they store their roots as of old, and long after the superstructure has disappeared posterity remark its dent in the earth. The house is still but a sort of porch at the entrance of a burrow.

At length, in the beginning of May, with the help of some of my acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity, I set up the frame of my house. No man was ever more honored in the character of his raisers than I.<sup>9</sup> They are destined, I trust, to assist at the raising of loftier structures one day. I began to occupy my house on the 4th of July, as soon as it was boarded and roofed, for the boards were carefully feather-edged and lapped, so that it was perfectly impervious to rain; but before boarding I laid the foundation of a chimney at one end, bringing two cartloads of stones up the hill from the pond in my arms. I built the chimney after my hocking in the fall, before a fire became necessary for warmth, doing my cooking in the mean while out of doors on the ground, early in the morning: which mode I still think is in some respects more convenient and agreeable than the usual one. When it stormed before my bread was baked, I fixed a few boards over the fire, and sat under them to watch my loaf, and passed some pleasant hours in that way. In those days, when my hands were much employed, I read but little, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground, my holder, or tablecloth, afforded me as much entertainment, in fact answered the same purpose as the *Iliad*. \* \* \*

Before winter I built a chimney, and shingled the sides of my house, which were already impervious to rain, with imperfect and sappy shingles made of the first slice of the log, whose edges I was

8. At the fall of Troy (in Homer's *Iliad*) Ulysses and Diomedes, Greek conquerors, carried off the images of the gods, including the Palladium (Pallas was protectress of the city), while Helen

watched and encouraged them.

9. According to tradition, nine friends were his house-raisers, including Emerson, Bronson Alcott, and W. E. Channing.



obliged to straighten with a plane.

I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, and eight-feet posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap-doors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite. The exact cost of my house, paying the usual price for such materials as I used, but not counting the work, all of which was done by myself, was as follows; and I give the details because very few are able to tell exactly what their houses cost, and fewer still, if any, the separate cost of the various materials which compose them:—

Boards	\$8 03½,	mostly shanty boards.
Refuse shingles for roof and sides	4 00	
Laths	1 25	
Two second-hand windows with glass	2 43	
One thousand old brick	4 00	
Two casks of lime	2 40	That was high.
Hair	0 31	More than I needed.
Mantle-tree iron	0 15	
Nails	3 90	
Hinges and screws	0 14	
Latch	0 10	
Chalk	0 01	
Transportation	1 40	{ I carried a good part on my back.
In all	<u>\$28 12½</u>	

These are all the materials, excepting the timber, stones, and sand, which I claimed by squatter's right. I have also a small woodshed adjoining, made chiefly of the stuff which was left after building the house.

I intend to build me a house which will surpass any on the main street in Concord in grandeur and luxury, as soon as it pleases me as much and will cost me no more than my present one.

I thus found that the student who wishes for a shelter can obtain one for a lifetime at an expense not greater than the rent which he now pays annually. If I seem to boast more than is becoming, my excuse is that I brag for humanity rather than for myself; and my shortcomings and inconsistencies do not affect the truth of my statement. Notwithstanding much cant and hypocrisy,—chaff which I find it difficult to separate from my wheat, but for which I am as sorry as any man,—I will breathe freely and stretch myself in this respect, it is such a relief to both the moral and physical system; and am resolved that I will not through humility become the devil's at-

torney. I will endeavor to speak a good word for the truth. At Cambridge College the mere rent of a student's room, which is only a little larger than my own, is thirty dollars each year, though the corporation had the advantage of building thirty-two side by side and under one roof, and the occupant suffers the inconvenience of many and noisy neighbors, and perhaps a residence in the fourth story.<sup>1</sup> I cannot but think that if we had more true wisdom in these respects, not only less education would be needed, because, forsooth, more would already have been acquired, but the pecuniary expense of getting an education would in a great measure vanish. Those conveniences which the student requires at Cambridge or elsewhere cost him or somebody else ten times as great a sacrifice of life as they would with proper management on both sides. Those things for which the most money is demanded are never the things which the student most wants. Tuition, for instance, is an important item in the term bill, while for the far more valuable education which he gets by associating with the most cultivated of his contemporaries no charge is made. The mode of founding a college is, commonly, to get up a subscription of dollars and cents, and then, following blindly the principles of a division of labor to its extreme,—a principle which should never be followed but with circumspection,—to call in a contractor who makes this a subject of speculation, and he employs Irishmen or other operatives actually to lay the foundations, while the students that are to be are said to be fitting themselves for it; and for these oversights successive generations have to pay. I think that it would be *better than this*, for the students, or those who desire to be benefited by it, even to lay the foundation themselves. The student who secures his coveted leisure and retirement by systematically shirking any labor necessary to man obtains but an ignoble and unprofitable leisure, defrauding himself of the experience which alone can make leisure fruitful. "But," says one, "you do not mean that the students should go to work with their hands instead of their heads?" I do not mean that exactly, but I mean something which he might think a good deal like that; I mean that they should not *play* life, or *study* it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly *live* it from beginning to end. How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living? Methinks this would exercise their minds as much as mathematics. If I wished a boy to know something about the arts and sciences, for instance, I would not pursue the common course, which is merely to send him into the neighborhood of some professor, where anything is professed and practised but the art of life;—to survey the world through a telescope

1. Thoreau's Harvard room was on the fourth floor of Hollis Hall; he defrayed expenses by part-time work, and rela-

tives managed to give him some financial assistance.

or a microscope, and never with his natural eye; to study chemistry, and not learn how his bread is made, or mechanics, and not learn how it is earned; to discover new satellites to Neptune, and not detect the motes in his eyes, or to what vagabond he is a satellite himself; or to be devoured by the monsters that swarm all around him, while contemplating the monsters in a drop of vinegar. Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month,—the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this—or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the meanwhile, and had received a Rodgers penknife<sup>2</sup> from his father? Which would be most likely to cut his fingers? . . . To my astonishment I was informed on leaving college that I had studied navigation!—why, if I had taken one turn down the harbor I should have known more about it. Even the *poor* student studies and is taught only *political* economy, while that economy of living which is synonymous with philosophy is not even sincerely professed in our colleges. The consequence is, that while he is reading Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Say,<sup>3</sup> he runs his father in debt irretrievably.

As with our colleges, so with a hundred “modern improvements;” there is an illusion about them; there is not always a positive advance. The devil goes on exacting compound interest to the last for his early share and numerous succeeding investments in them. Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York. We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas;<sup>4</sup> but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. Either is in such a predicament as the man who was earnest to be introduced to a distinguished deaf woman,<sup>5</sup> but when he was presented, and one end of her ear trumpet was put into his hand, had nothing to say. As if the main object were to talk fast and not to talk sensibly. We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the Old World some weeks nearer to the New; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide<sup>6</sup> has the whooping cough. After all, the man whose horse trots a mile in a minute does not carry the most im-

2. The knives of James Rodgers and Sons, Sheffield, England, were then famous.

3. Adam Smith (1723–1790), Scottish economist, in *The Wealth of Nations* founded “classical” economics; David Ricardo (1772–1823), an Englishman, broadened its applications; Jean Baptiste Say (1767–1832) was a French economic thinker of the same school.

4. Samuel F. B. Morse first succeeded in transmitting a message by telegraph in 1844; by 1850 nearly fifty commercial companies had been established.

5. Harriet Martineau, then famous British novelist and economist, who visited Concord in 1836.

6. Adelaide, Princess of Orleans, sister of King Louis Philippe of France; she died in 1847.

portant messages; he is not an evangelist, nor does he come round eating locusts and wild honey.<sup>7</sup> I doubt if Flying Childers<sup>8</sup> ever carried a peck of corn to mill. \* \* \*

For more than five years I maintained myself thus solely by the labor of my hands, and I found, that by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study. I have thoroughly tried school-keeping, and found that my expenses were in proportion, or rather out of proportion, to my income, for I was obliged to dress and train, not to say think and believe, accordingly, and I lost my time into the bargain. As I did not teach for the good of my fellow-men, but simply for a livelihood, this was a failure. I have tried trade; but I found that it would take ten years to get under way in that, and that then I should probably be on my way to the devil. I was actually afraid that I might by that time be doing what is called a good business. When formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experience in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleberries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice,—for my greatest skill has been to want but little,—so little capital it required, so little distraction from my wonted moods, I foolishly thought. While my acquaintances went unhesitatingly into trade or the professions, I contemplated this occupation as most like theirs; ranging the hills all summer to pick the berries which came in my way, and thereafter carelessly dispose of them; so, to keep the flocks of Admetus. I also dreamed that I might gather the wild herbs, or carry evergreens to such villagers as loved to be reminded of the woods, even to the city, by hay-cart loads. But I have since learned that trade curses every thing it handles; and though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business.

As I preferred some things to others, and especially valued my freedom, as I could fare hard and yet succeed well, I did not wish to spend my time in earning rich carpets or other fine furniture, or delicate cookery, or a house in the Grecian or the Gothic style just yet. If there are any to whom it is no interruption to acquire these things, and who know how to use them when acquired, I relinquish to them the pursuit. Some are "industrious," and appear to love labor for its own sake, or perhaps because it keeps them out of worse mischief; to such I have at present nothing to say. Those who would not know what to do with more leisure than they now enjoy, I might advise to work twice as hard as they do,—work till they pay for them-

7. Cf. the evangelist John the Baptist (Matthew iii: 1-4).

8. An English race horse, born 1715, then the fastest on record.

selves, and get their free papers. For myself I found that the occupation of a day-laborer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in a year to support one. The laborer's day ends with the going down of the sun, and he is then free to devote himself to his chosen pursuit, independent of his labor; but his employer, who speculates from month to month, has no respite from one end of the year to the other.

In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime,<sup>5</sup> if we will live simply and wisely; as the pursuits of the simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial. It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow, unless he sweats easier than I do.

One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, *if he had the means*. I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead. The youth may build or plant or sail, only let him not be hindered from doing that which he tells me he would like to do. It is by a mathematical point only that we are wise, as the sailor or the fugitive slave keeps the polestar in his eye; but that is sufficient guidance for all our life. We may not arrive at our port within a calculable period, but we would preserve the true course.

Undoubtedly, in this case, what is true for one is truer still for a thousand, as a large house is not proportionally more expensive than a small one, since one roof may cover, one cellar underlie, and one wall separate several apartments. But for my part, I preferred the solitary dwelling. Moreover, it will commonly be cheaper to build the whole yourself than to convince another of the advantage of the common wall; and when you have done this, the common partition, to be much cheaper, must be a thin one, and that other may prove a bad neighbor, and also not keep his side in repair. The only coöperation which is commonly possible is exceedingly partial and superficial; and what little true coöperation there is, is if it were not, being a harmony inaudible to men. If a man has faith he will coöperate with equal faith every where, if he has not faith, he will continue to live like the rest of

5. A familiar theory of Charles Fourier (1772-1837), French founder of the agrarian co-operative movement which was then attractive to American intellectuals, and represented, among tran-

scendentalists, by Brook Farm (1841-1847) and Fruitlands (1842), before Thoreau tested the agrarian hypothesis on an *individualistic* basis.

the world, whatever company he is joined to. To coöperate, in the highest as well as the lowest sense, means *to get our living together*. I heard it proposed lately that two young men should travel together over the world, the one without money, earning his means as he went, before the mast and behind the plough, the other carrying a bill of exchange in his pocket. It was easy to see that they could not long be companions or coöperate, since one would not *operate* at all. They would part at the first interesting crisis in their adventures. Above all, as I have implied, the man who goes alone can start to-day; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and it may be a long time before they get off.

But all this is very selfish, I have heard some of my townsmen say. I confess that I have hitherto indulged very little in philanthropic enterprises. I have made some sacrifices to a sense of duty, and among others have sacrificed this pleasure also. There are those who have used all their arts to persuade me to undertake the support of some poor family in the town; and if I had nothing to do,—for the devil finds employment for the idle,<sup>6</sup>—I might try my hand at some such pastime as that. However, when I have thought to indulge myself in this respect, and lay their Heaven under an obligation by maintaining certain poor persons in all respects as comfortably as I maintain myself, and have even ventured so far as to make them the offer, they have one and all unhesitatingly preferred to remain poor. While my townsmen and women are devoted in so many ways to the good of their fellows, I trust that one at least may be spared to other and less humane pursuits. You must have a genius for charity as well as for any thing else. As for Doing-good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution. Probably I should not consciously and deliberately forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me, to save the universe from annihilation; and I believe that a like but infinitely greater steadfastness elsewhere is all that now preserves it. But I would not stand between any man and his genius; and to him who does this work, which I decline, with his whole heart and soul and life, I would say, Persevere, even if the world call it doing evil, as it is most likely they will. \* \* \*

There is no odor so bad as that which arises from goodness tainted. It is human, it is divine, carrion. If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life, as from that dry and parching wind of the African deserts called the simoom, which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear that I

6. Restatement from a hymn then very familiar (Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs*, No. XX).

should get some of his good done to me,—some of its virus mingled with my blood. No,—in this case I would rather suffer evil the natural way. A man is not a good *man* to me because he will feed me if I should be starving, or warm me if I should be freezing, or pull me out of a ditch if I should ever fall into one. I can find you a Newfoundland dog that will do as much. Philanthropy is not love for one's fellow-man in the broadest sense. Howard<sup>1</sup> was no doubt an exceedingly kind and worthy man in his way, and has his reward; but, comparatively speaking, what are a hundred Howards to *us*, if their philanthropy do not help *us* in our best estate, when we are most worthy to be helped? I never heard of a philanthropic meeting in which it was sincerely proposed to do any good to me, or the like of me. \* \* \*

I believe that what so saddens the reformer is not his sympathy with his fellows in distress, but, though he be the holiest son of God, is his private ail. Let this be righted, let the spring come to him, the morning rise over his couch, and he will forsake his generous companions without apology. My excuse for not lecturing against the use of tobacco is, that I never chewed it; that is a penalty which reformed tobacco-chewers have to pay; though there are things enough I have chewed, which I could lecture against. If you should ever be betrayed into any of these philanthropies, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does,<sup>3</sup> for it is not worth knowing. Rescue the drowning and tie your shoe-strings. Take your time, and set about some free labor. \* \* \*

## II. *Where I Lived, and What I Lived For*

\* \* \* I do not propose to write an ode to dejection,<sup>5</sup> but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.

When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defence against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough, weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character, reminding me of a certain house on a mountain which I had visited a year before.

This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling

1. John Howard (1726?–1790), British leader of the prison-reform movement.  
3. Cf. Matthew vi; 3.

5. Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" was then generally familiar.

god, and where a goddess might trail her garments. The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere.

The only house I had been the owner of before, if I except a boat, was a tent, which I used occasionally when making excursions in the summer, and this is still rolled up in my garret; but the boat, after passing from hand to hand, has gone down the stream of time. With this more substantial shelter about me, I had made some progress toward settling in the world. This frame, so slightly clad, was a sort of crystallization around me, and reacted on the builder. It was suggestive somewhat as a picture in outlines. I did not need to go outdoors to take the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. It was not so much within-doors as behind a door where I sat, even in the rainiest weather. The *Harivansa*<sup>2</sup> says, "An abode without birds is like a meat without seasoning." Such was not my abode, for I found myself suddenly neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them. I was not only nearer to some of those which commonly frequent the garden and the orchard, but to those wilder and more thrilling songsters of the forest which never, or rarely, serenade a villager,—the wood thrush, the veery, the scarlet tanager, the field sparrow, the whip-poor-will, and many others.

I was seated by the shore of a small pond, about a mile and a half south of the village of Concord and somewhat higher than it, in the midst of an extensive wood between that town and Lincoln,<sup>3</sup> and about two miles south of that our only field known to fame, Concord Battle Ground;<sup>4</sup> but I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon. For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains.

This small lake was of most value as a neighbor in the intervals

2. The *Harivansa*, a Hindu religious epic of the fifth century (associated with the earlier *Mahabharata*), recorded the deeds and religious teachings of Krishna, incarnation of the god Vishnu.

Langois' French translation (1834-1835) influenced the transcendentalists.

3. On the road to Sudbury.

4. See "Concord Hymn" (1837), in the selections from Emerson, above.



of a gentle rain-storm in August, when, both air and water being perfectly still, but the sky overcast, mid-afternoon had all the serenity of evening, and the wood thrush sang around, and was heard from shore to shore. A lake like this is never smoother than at such a time; and the clear portion of the air above it being shallow and darkened by clouds, the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself so much the more important. From a hill-top near by, where the wood had been recently cut off, there was a pleasing vista southward across the pond, through a wide indentation in the hills which form the shore there, where their opposite sides sloping toward each other suggested a stream flowing out in that direction through a wooded valley, but stream there was none. That way I looked between and over the near green hills to some distant and higher ones in the horizon, tinged with blue. Indeed, by standing on tiptoe I could catch a glimpse of some of the peaks of the still bluer and more distant mountain ranges in the northwest, those true-blue coins from heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village. But in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods which surrounded me. It is well to have some water in your neighborhood, to give buoyancy to and float the earth. One value even of the smallest well is, that when you look into it you see that earth is not continent but insular. This is as important as that it keeps butter cool. When I looked across the pond from this peak toward the Sudbury meadows,<sup>5</sup> which in time of flood I distinguished elevated perhaps by a mirage in their seething valley, like a coin in a basin, all the earth beyond the pond appeared like a thin crust insulated and floated even by this small sheet of intervening water, and I was reminded that this on which I dwelt was but *dry land*. \* \* \*

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is

5. As a hiker Thoreau had often gone to the Sudbury meadows, the thickly wooded area at the confluence of two forks of the Concord River.

the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."<sup>4</sup>

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies<sup>5</sup> we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning,<sup>6</sup> and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy,<sup>7</sup> made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers,<sup>8</sup> and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And

4. As stated in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

5. Homer (*Iliad*, Book III, l. 5) first told of the pygmies, people so tiny that they were attacked by flights of cranes.

6. In dead reckoning, a ship's position is determined by the calculation of

speed, distances, and directions sailed, rather than by the more accurate method of astronomical observation.

7. The first modern confederacy of German states (1815) was too loosely organized for effectiveness.

8. Railroad ties.

every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. As for *work*, we haven't any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still. If I should only give a few pulls at the parish bell-rope, as for a fire, that is, without setting the bell,<sup>9</sup> there is hardly a man on his farm in the outskirts of Concord, notwithstanding that press of engagements which was his excuse so many times this morning, nor a boy, nor a woman, I might almost say, but would forsake all and follow that sound, not mainly to save property from the flames, but, if we will confess the truth, much more to see it burn, since burn it must, and we, be it known, did not set it on fire,—or to see it put out, and have a hand in it, if that is done as handsomely; yes, even if it were the parish church itself. Hardly a man takes a half-hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half-hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed. After a night's sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. "Pray tell me anything new that has happened to a man anywhere on this globe,"—and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, that a man has had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River;<sup>1</sup> never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed mammoth cave of this world,<sup>2</sup> and has but the rudiment of an eye himself.

For my part, I could easily do without the post-office. I think that there are very few important communications made through it. To speak critically, I never received more than one or two letters in my life—I wrote this some years ago—that were worth the postage. The penny-post is, commonly, an institution through which you seriously offer a man that penny for his thoughts which is so often

9. Without giving the alarm bell a complete rotation instead of a pendulum swing.

1. Properly, the Ouachita River, in southwest Arkansas; "gouging" was a form of mayhem then prevalent in the

physical combat of the frontier.

2. Cf. "the dark unfathomed caves of ocean" in Gray's "Elegy"; here combined with Kentucky's famous Mammoth Cave.

safely offered in jest. And I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad,<sup>3</sup> or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter,—we never need read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a myriad instances and applications? To a philosopher all *news*, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea. Yet not a few are greedy after this gossip. There was such a rush, as I hear, the other day at one of the offices to learn the foreign news by the last arrival, that several large squares of plate glass belonging to the establishment were broken by the pressure,—news which I seriously think a ready wit might write a twelvemonth, or twelve years, beforehand with sufficient accuracy. As for Spain,<sup>4</sup> for instance, if you know how to throw in Don Carlos and the Infanta, and Don Pedro and Seville and Granada, from time to time in the right proportions,—they may have changed the names a little since I saw the papers,—and serve up a bull-fight when other entertainments fail, it will be true to the letter, and give us as good an idea of the exact state or ruin of things in Spain as the most succinct and lucid reports under this head in the newspapers: and as for England, almost the last significant scrap of news from that quarter was the revolution<sup>5</sup> of 1649; and if you have learned the history of her crops for an average year, you never need attend to that thing again, unless your speculations are of a merely pecuniary character. If one may judge who rarely looks into the newspapers, nothing new does ever happen in foreign parts, a French revolution not excepted.<sup>6</sup>

What news! how much more important to know what that is which was never old! "Kieou-he-yu (great dignitary of the state of Wei) sent a man to Khoun-g-tseu to know his news. Khoun-g-tseu caused the messenger to be seated near him, and questioned him in these terms: What is your master doing? The messenger answered with respect: My master desires to diminish the number of his faults, but he cannot come to the end of them. The messenger being gone, the philosopher remarked: What a worthy messenger! What a worthy messenger!"<sup>7</sup> The preacher, instead of vexing the ears of drowsy farmers on their day of rest at the end of the week,—for Sunday is the fit conclusion of an ill-spent week, and not the fresh and

3. From Boston to Troy; later a branch of the Boston and Maine system.

4. What follows refers to the contemporary disorders between the Carlists (who recognized Don Carlos II as King Charles VI) and supporters of the Infanta, who had been proclaimed Queen Isabella II in 1843.

5. The English Civil War (1642–1649),

indeed a "revolution," resulted in the execution of Charles I, the victory of Cromwell and the temporary abolition of the monarchy (1649–1660).

6. On his manuscript Thoreau noted that he wrote this before "the last Revolution broke out" (1848).

7. Cf. *Analects of Confucius*, XIV, 26, 1–2.

brave beginning of a new one,—with this one other draggle-tail of a sermon, should shout with thundering voice, “Pausel! Avast! Why so seeming fast, but deadly slow?”

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows,<sup>8</sup> men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations. Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure. I have read in a Hindoo book, that “there was a king’s son, who, being expelled in infancy from his native city, was brought up by a forester, and, growing up to maturity in that state, imagined himself to belong to the barbarous race with which he lived. One of his father’s ministers having discovered him, revealed to him what he was, and the misconception of his character was removed, and he knew himself to be a prince. So soul,” continues the Hindoo philosopher, “from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be *Brahme*.”<sup>9</sup> I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that is which *appears* to be. If a man should walk through this town and see only the reality, where, think you, would the “Mill-dam” go to?<sup>1</sup> If he should give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. Look at a meeting-house, or a court-house, or a jail, or a shop, or a dwelling-house, and say what that thing really is before a true gaze, and they would all go to pieces in your account of them. Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions

8. In the sense of pretense or mere appearance.

9. To the Hindu, God the Creator; but also, as here, the supreme essence or intelligence. Cf. the Oversoul of transcendentalism, and see Emerson’s “Brahma” and the footnote to that

poem.

1. One manuscript version reads “State Street,” another place common to every town; the transcendentalist sought a transcendent reality behind the actual or familiar object.

are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at least could accomplish it.

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry,—determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigor, sail by it, looking another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses.<sup>2</sup> If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pains. If the bell rings, why should we run? We will consider what kind of music they are like. Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through Church and State, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui*,<sup>3</sup> below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer,<sup>4</sup> but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter,<sup>5</sup> and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

2. Mariners bewitched by the Sirens' songs often leaped to destruction; but Ulysses (Odysseus) had himself bound to the mast, having avoided Charybdis, the "whirlpool" above (*Odyssey*, Book XII).

3. Literally, a "point of support"; a

firm base.

4. Ancient instrument devised to record the rise and fall of the great floods of the Nile; the associated coinage of "Realometer" contrasts the relative with the absolute.

5. Properly, "scimitar" or "scimiter."

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.<sup>6</sup> I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining-rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

### XVIII. Conclusion

\* \* \*

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. \* \* \*

6. Cf. *The Pleasures of Memory* (Part II, i, ll. 1-2), a poem then familiar, in which Samuel Rogers (1763-1855)

spoke of sailing "the stream of Time" for Memory's sake; compare Thoreau's "eternity" below.

I do not suppose that I have attained to obscurity, but I should be proud if no more fatal fault were found with my pages on this score than was found with the Walden ice. Southern customers objected to its blue color, which is the evidence of its purity, as if it were muddy, and preferred the Cambridge ice, which is white, but tastes of weeds. The purity men love is like the mists which envelop the earth, and not like the azure ether beyond.

Some are dinning in our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even the Elizabethan men. But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion.<sup>8</sup> Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy that he can? Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made.

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not? \* \* \*

I live in the angle of a leaden wall, into whose composition was poured a little alloy of bell-metal. Often, in the repose of my mid-day, there reaches my ears a confused *tintinnabulum*<sup>3</sup> from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries. My neighbors tell me of their adventures with famous gentlemen and ladies, what notabilities they met at the dinner-table; but I am no more interested in such things than in the contents of the Daily Times. The interest and the conversation are about costume and manners chiefly; but a goose is a goose still, dress it as you will. They tell me of California and Texas, of England and the Indies, of the Hon. Mr. — of Georgia or of Massachusetts, all transient and fleeting phenomena, till I am ready to leap from their court-yard like the Mameluke bey.<sup>4</sup> I delight to come to my bearings,—not walk in procession with pomp and parade, in a conspicuous place, but to walk even with the Builder of the universe, if I may,—not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by. What are men celebrating? They are all on a committee of arrange-

8. Cf. Ecclesiastes ix: 4.

3. Latin, meaning "a ringing of little bells."

4. One of the leaders of the Mamelukes,

warlike Egyptian sectaries noted for agility, exterminated (1811) by Mehemet Ali in his unification of Egypt.



ments, and hourly expect a speech from somebody. God is only the president of the day, and Webster<sup>5</sup> is his orator. I love to weigh, to settle, to gravitate toward that which most strongly and rightfully attracts me;—not hang by the beam of the scale and try to weigh less,—not suppose a case, but take the case that is; to travel the only path I can, and that on which no power can resist me. It affords me no satisfaction to commence to spring an arch before I have got a solid foundation. Let us not play at kittly-benders.<sup>6</sup> There is a solid bottom everywhere. We read that the traveller asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy replied that it had. But presently the traveller's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, "I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom." "So it has," answered the latter, "but you have not got half way to it yet." So it is with the bogs and quicksands of society; but he is an old boy that knows it. \* \* \*

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently washed, before science began to record its freshets. Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts,—from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb,—heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board,—many unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled<sup>8</sup> furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!

I do not say that John or Jonathan<sup>9</sup> will realize all this; but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us.

5. Satirical reference to Daniel Webster.

6. A game involving skill in skating over thin ice.

8. Given as a token gift; perfunctorily passed along.

9. John Bull, the familiar personification of the British, collectively; and Brother Jonathan, the personification of the Americans.

Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

1846

1854

## Civil Disobedience<sup>1</sup>

I heartily accept the motto,—“That government is best which governs least;”<sup>2</sup> and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,—“That government is best which governs not at all;” and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals<sup>3</sup> using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

This American government,—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves. But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how suc-

1. “Civil Disobedience” was neglected for more than half a century, although it formulates democratic ideas inherent in *Walden*. Thoreau believed, and demonstrated by example, that if government, responding to expediency or majority pressures, infringes upon the fundamental freedom of thought or choice of moral alternatives of the individual or the minority, the remedy is nonviolent, or pacific, resistance. Recently these ideas have had increasing attention wherever rising population and industrial pressures endanger the preservation of democratic individualism. More strikingly, through its acknowledged influence on Mahatma Gandhi, the essay became associated with a movement of incalculable significance for Asia and the world. This essay first appeared in

the anthology *Aesthetic Essays* (1849), edited by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, transcendentalist bookseller in Boston. There it was entitled “Resistance to Civil Government.” Under its present title it appeared in the posthumous collections *A Yankee in Canada* (1866) and *Miscellanies* (1893).

2. These words echo Paine and Jefferson; the belief that government was a social contract sanctioned only by necessity was an active influence during the Revolution and the Constitutional Convention.

3. The war was regarded by northern reformers as resulting primarily from the selfish interest of southern politicians and northern cotton merchants in extending slave territory.

cessfully men can be imposed on, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow. Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. *It* does not keep the country free. *It* does not settle the West. *It* does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. For government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it. Trade and commerce, if they were not made of india-rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way; and, if one were to judge these men wholly by the effects of their actions and not partly by their intentions, they would deserve to be classed and punished with those mischievous persons who put obstructions on the railroads.

But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but *at once* a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?<sup>4</sup>—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation *with* a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys,

4. Recalling a principal controversy of the Constitutional Convention, where the conservative minority, represented by

Hamilton and Adams, were overcome by the Jeffersonians, who favored majority rule.

and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? Visit the Navy-Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts,—a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniments, though it may be,—

“Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,  
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;  
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot  
O’er the grave where our hero we buried.”<sup>5</sup>

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, *posse comitatus*,<sup>6</sup> etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others—as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders—serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without *intending* it, as God. A very few,—as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men*—serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it. A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be “clay,” and “stop a hole to keep the wind away,”<sup>7</sup> but leave that office to his dust at least:—

“I am too high-born to be propertied,  
To be a secondary at control,  
Or useful serving-man and instrument  
To any sovereign state throughout the world.”<sup>8</sup>

5. Charles Wolfe (1791–1823), Irish clergyman who died at thirty-two, won several decades of remembrance by his “Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna” (1817), of which this is the opening.  
6. Legal Latin, meaning “having the

authority of the county”; cf. the sheriff’s “posse.”

7. Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene 1, ll. 236–237.

8. Cf. Shakespeare, *King John*, Act V, Scene 2, ll. 79–82.

He who gives himself entirely to his fellow-men appears to them useless and selfish; but he who gives himself partially to them is pronounced a benefactor and philanthropist.

How does it become a man to behave toward this American government to-day? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it.<sup>9</sup> I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as *my* government which is the *slave's* government also.

All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. But almost all say that such is not the case now. But such was the case, they think, in the Revolution of '75. If one were to tell me that this was a bad government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make an ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country<sup>1</sup> is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army.

Paley,<sup>2</sup> a common authority with many on moral questions, in his chapter on the "Duty of Submission to Civil Government," resolves all civil obligation into expediency; and he proceeds to say "that so long as the interest of the whole society requires it, that is, so long as the established government cannot be resisted or changed without public inconvenience, it is the will of God . . . that the established government be obeyed,—and no longer. This principle being admitted, the justice of every particular case of resistance is reduced to a computation of the quantity of the danger and grievance on the one side, and of the probability and expense of redressing it on the other." Of this, he says, every man shall judge for himself. But Paley appears never to have contemplated those cases to which the rule of expediency does not apply, in which a people, as well as an individual, must do justice, cost what it may. If I have unjustly wrested a plank from a drowning man, I must restore it to him though I drown myself. This, according to Paley, would be

9. Many accused Polk's administration (1845-1849) of strengthening slavery through fugitive-slave laws and the Mexican War.

1. Mexico.

2. William Paley (1743-1805), British thinker, whose utilitarianism motivates this quotation from his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, (1785).

inconvenient. But he that would save his life, in such a case, shall lose it.<sup>3</sup> This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people.

In their practice, nations agree with Paley; but does any one think that Massachusetts does exactly what is right at the present crisis?

"A drab of state, a cloth-o'-silver slut,  
To have her train borne up, and her soul trail in the dirt."

Practically speaking, the opponents to a reform in Massachusetts are not a hundred thousand politicians at the South, but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here, who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity, and are not prepared to do justice to the slave and to Mexico, *cost what it may*. I quarrel not with far-off foes, but with those who, near at home, coöperate with, and do the bidding of, those far away, and without whom the latter would be harmless. We are accustomed to say, that the mass of men are unprepared; but improvement is slow, because the few are not materially wiser or better than the many. It is not so important that many should be as good as you, as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that will leaven the whole lump.<sup>4</sup> There are thousands who are *in opinion* opposed to slavery and to the war, who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them; who, esteeming themselves children of Washington and Franklin, sit down with their hands in their pockets, and say that they know not what to do, and do nothing; who even postpone the question of freedom to the question of free trade, and quietly read the price-current along with the latest advices from Mexico, after dinner, and, it may be, fall asleep over them both. What is the price-current of an honest man and patriot to-day? They hesitate, and they regret, and sometimes they petition; but they do nothing in earnest and with effect. They will wait, well disposed, for others to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret. At most, they give only a cheap vote, and a feeble countenance and God-speed, to the right, as it goes by them. There are nine hundred and ninety-nine patrons of virtue to one virtuous man. But it is easier to deal with the real possessor of a thing than with the temporary guardian of it.

All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting *for the right* is *doing* nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should

3. Cf. Luke ix: 24.

4. Cf. I Corinthians v: 6.

prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority. There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men. When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote. *They* will then be the only slaves. Only *his* vote can hasten the abolition of slavery who asserts his own freedom by his vote.

I hear of a convention to be held at Baltimore,<sup>5</sup> or elsewhere, for the selection of a candidate for the Presidency, made up chiefly of editors, and men who are politicians by profession; but I think, what is it to any independent, intelligent, and respectable man what decision they may come to? Shall we not have the advantage of his wisdom and honesty, nevertheless? Can we not count upon some independent votes? Are there not many individuals in the country who do not attend conventions? But no: I find that the respectable man, so called, has immediately drifted from his position, and despairs of his country, when his country has more reason to despair of him. He forthwith adopts one of the candidates thus selected as the only *available* one, thus proving that he is himself *available* for any purposes of the demagogue. His vote is of no more worth than that of any unprincipled foreigner or hireling native, who may have been bought. O for a man who is a *man*, and, as my neighbor says, has a bone in his back which you cannot pass your hand through! Our statistics are at fault: the population has been returned too large. How many *men* are there to a square thousand miles in this country? Hardly one. Does not America offer any inducement for men to settle here? The American has dwindled into an Odd Fellow,<sup>6</sup>—one who may be known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance; whose first and chief concern, on coming into the world, is to see that the almshouses are in good repair; and, before yet he has lawfully donned the virile garb,<sup>7</sup> to collect a fund for the support of the widows and orphans that may be; who, in short, ventures to live only by the aid of the Mutual Insurance company, which has promised to bury him decently.

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous, wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pur-

5. The Democratic convention at Baltimore, in May, 1848, fulfilled Thoreau's prediction of expediency in its platform, and in its man, Lewis Cass, "a northern man with southern principles."

6. The Independent Order of Odd Fel-

lows, one of numerous secret fraternal societies then being developed for social diversion and mutual insurance.

7. Cf. the *toga virilis*, which the Roman boy was permitted to wear on attaining the age of fourteen.

suits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too. See what gross inconsistency is tolerated. I have heard some of my townsmen say, "I should like to have them order me out to help put down an insurrection of the slaves, or to march to Mexico;—see if I would go;" and yet these very men have each, directly by their allegiance, and so indirectly, at least, by their money, furnished a substitute. The soldier is applauded who refuses to serve in an unjust war by those who do not refuse to sustain the unjust government which makes the war; is applauded by those whose own act and authority he disregards and sets at naught; as if the state were penitent to that degree that it hired one to scourge it while it sinned, but not to that degree that it left off sinning for a moment. Thus, under the name of Order and Civil Government, we are all made at last to pay homage to and support our own meanness. After the first blush of sin comes its indifference; and from immoral it becomes, as it were, *unmoral*, and not quite unnecessary to that life which we have made.

The broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it. The slight reproach to which the virtue of patriotism is commonly liable, the noble are most likely to incur. Those who, while they disapprove of the character and measures of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support are undoubtedly its most conscientious supporters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform. Some are petitioning the State to dissolve the Union, to disregard the requisitions of the President. Why do they not dissolve it themselves,—the union between themselves and the State,—and refuse to pay their quota into its treasury? Do not they stand in the same relation to the State that the State does to the Union? And have not the same reasons prevented the State from resisting the Union which have prevented them from resisting the State?

How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy it? Is there any enjoyment in it, if his opinion is that he is aggrieved? If you are cheated out of a single dollar by your neighbor, you do not rest satisfied with knowing that you are cheated, or with saying that you are cheated, or even with petitioning him to pay you your due; but you take effectual steps at once to obtain the full amount, and see that you are never cheated again. Action from principle, the perception and the performance of right, changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with anything which was. It not only divides States and churches, it divides families; ay, it divides the *individual*, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we



endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. *It* makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and *do* better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther,<sup>8</sup> and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

One would think, that a deliberate and practical denial of its authority was the only offense never contemplated by government; else, why has it not assigned its definite, its suitable and proportionate penalty? If a man who has no property refuses but once to earn nine shillings for the State, he is put in prison for a period unlimited by any law that I know, and determined only by the discretion of those who placed him there; but if he should steal ninety times nine shillings from the State, he is soon permitted to go at large again.

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth,—certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do *everything*, it is not necessary that he should do *something* wrong. It is not my business to be petitioning the Governor or the Legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness and con-

8. Copernicus was on his deathbed (1543) when his description of the solar system was published, later to come under the ban of the Church; but Luther,

the founder of the German Reformation, was officially excommunicated in 1521, twenty-five years before his death.

sideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserves it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death, which convulse the body.

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

I meet this American government, or its representative, the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year—no more—in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then. My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with,—for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel,—and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well what he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he shall treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace, and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more impetuous thought or speech corresponding with his action. I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,—if ten *honest* men only,—ay, if *one* HONEST man, in this State of Massachusetts, *ceasing to hold slaves*, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America.<sup>1</sup> For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. If my esteemed neighbor, the State's ambassador,<sup>2</sup> who will devote his days to the settlement of the question of human rights in the Council Chamber, instead of being

9. Cf. the proverb "One on God's side is a majority."

1. An example of the operation of passive resistance, the doctrine for which Gandhi acknowledged indebtedness to Thoreau.

2. Samuel Hoar (1778–1856), distinguished Concord lawyer and congress-

man, was officially delegated to South Carolina to test certain laws denying the ports to Negro seamen on Massachusetts ships, under penalty of arrest and possible enslavement. Hoar was forcibly expelled from South Carolina by action of the legislature.

threatened with the prisons of Carolina, were to sit down the prisoner of Massachusetts, that State which is so anxious to foist the sin of slavery upon her sister,—though at present she can discover only an act of inhospitality to be the ground of a quarrel with her.—the Legislature would not wholly waive the subject the following winter.

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place to-day, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate, but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not *with* her, but *against* her,—the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

I have contemplated the imprisonment of the offender, rather than the seizure of his goods,—though both will serve the same purpose,—because they who assert the purest right, and consequently are most dangerous to a corrupt State, commonly have not spent much time in accumulating property. To such the State renders

comparatively small service, and a slight tax is wont to appear exorbitant, particularly if they are obliged to earn it by special labor<sup>3</sup> with their hands. If there were one who lived wholly without the use of money, the State itself would hesitate to demand it of him. But the rich man—not to make any invidious comparison—is always sold to the institution which makes him rich. Absolutely speaking, the more money, the less virtue; for money comes between a man and his objects, and obtains them for him; and it was certainly no great virtue to obtain it. It puts to rest many questions which he would otherwise be taxed to answer; while the only new question which it puts is the hard but superfluous one, how to spend it. Thus his moral ground is taken from under his feet. The opportunities of living are diminished in proportion as what are called the “means” are increased. The best thing a man can do for his culture when he is rich is to endeavor to carry out those schemes which he entertained when he was poor. Christ answered the Herodians according to their condition. “Show me the tribute-money,” said he;—and took one penny out of his pocket;—if you use money which has the image of Caesar on it and which he has made current and valuable, that is, *if you are men of the State*, and gladly enjoy the advantages of Caesar’s government, then pay him back some of his own when he demands it. “Render therefore to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and to God those things which are God’s,”<sup>4</sup>—leaving them no wiser than before as to which was which; for they did not wish to know.

When I converse with the freest of my neighbors, I perceive that, whatever they may say about the magnitude and seriousness of the question, and their regard for the public tranquillity, the long and the short of the matter is, that they cannot spare the protection of the existing government, and they dread the consequences to their property and families of disobedience to it. For my own part, I should not like to think that I ever rely on the protection of the State. But, if I deny the authority of the State when it presents its tax-bill, it will soon take and waste all my property, and so harass me and my children without end. This is hard. This makes it impossible for a man to live honestly, and at the same time comfortably, in outward respects. It will not be worth the while to accumulate property; that would be sure to go again. You must hire or squat somewhere, and raise but a small crop, and eat that soon. You must live within yourself, and depend upon yourself always tucked up and ready for a start, and not have many affairs. A man may grow rich in Turkey even, if he will be in all respects a good subject of the Turkish government. Confucius<sup>5</sup> said: “If a state is governed by the principles of

3. Referring to his stand against the Massachusetts church tax and poll tax, assessed against all males.

4. Cf. Matthew xxii: 16–21.

5. Confucius (551?–479? B.C.) was pri-

marily a utilitarian and social philosopher; his formulation of Chinese “wisdom,” preserved in the *Analects*, was familiar in translation to the transcendentalists.

reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame; if a state is not governed by the principles of reason, riches and honors are the subjects of shame." No: until I want the protection of Massachusetts to be extended to me in some distant Southern port, where my liberty is endangered, or until I am bent solely on building up an estate at home by peaceful enterprise, I can afford to refuse allegiance to Massachusetts, and her right to my property and life. It costs me less in every sense to incur the penalty of disobedience to the State than it would to obey. I should feel as if I were worth less in that case.

Some years ago, the State met me in behalf of the Church, and commanded me to pay a certain sum toward the support of a clergyman whose preaching my father attended, but never I myself. "Pay," it said, "or be locked up in the jail."<sup>6</sup> I declined to pay. But, unfortunately, another man saw fit to pay it. I did not see why the schoolmaster should be taxed to support the priest, and not the priest the schoolmaster; for I was not the State's schoolmaster, but I supported myself by voluntary subscription. I did not see why the lyceum should not present its tax-bill, and have the State to back its demand, as well as the Church. However, at the request of the selectmen, I condescended to make some such statement as this in writing:—"Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined." This I gave to the town clerk; and he has it. The State, having thus learned that I did not wish to be regarded as a member of that church, has never made a like demand on me since; though it said that it must adhere to its original presumption that time. If I had known how to name them, I should then have signed off in detail from all the societies which I never signed on to; but I did not know where to find a complete list.

I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a jail once on this account, for one night;<sup>7</sup> and, as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use it could put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult

6. Thoreau's resistance to compulsory church taxes occurred in 1838, and he was not jailed. The failure to comply with the poll tax probably began in 1840 (see the next paragraph).

7. Bronson Alcott had resisted the tax and been jailed for one night in 1843.

The fundamental reason for resistance, for both men, was repugnance at supporting a state that recognized slavery, as Massachusetts still did in legal fact. H. S. Canby in his *Thoreau* (p. 473) dates Thoreau's experience in jail as July 23 or 24, 1846.

one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and *they* were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.

Thus the State never intentionally confronts a man's sense, intellectual or moral, but only his body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength. I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest. What force has a multitude? They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. They force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of *men* being *forced* to live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life were that to live? When I meet a government which says to me, "Your money or your life," why should I be in haste to give it my money? It may be in a great strait, and not know what to do: I cannot help that. It must help itself; do as I do. It is not worth the while to snivel about it. I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society. I am not the son of the engineer. I perceive that, when an acorn and a chestnut fall side by side, the one does not remain inert to make way for the other, but both obey their own laws, and spring and grow and flourish as best they can, till one, perchance, overshadows and destroys the other. If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man.

The night in prison was novel and interesting enough. The prisoners in their shirt-sleeves were enjoying a chat and the evening air in the doorway, when I entered. But the jailer said, "Come, boys, it is time to lock up;" and so they dispersed, and I heard the sound of their steps returning into the hollow apartments. My room-mate was introduced to me by the jailer as "a first-rate fellow and a clever<sup>8</sup> man." When the door was locked, he showed me where to hang my hat, and how he managed matters there. The rooms were white-washed once a month; and this one, at least, was the whitest, most simply furnished, and probably the neatest apartment in the town.

8. American dialect for "honest," "kind."

He naturally wanted to know where I came from, and what brought me there; and, when I had told him, I asked him in my turn how he came there, presuming him to be an honest man, of course; and, as the world goes, I believe he was. "Why," said he, "they accuse me of burning a barn; but I never did it." As near as I could discover, he had probably gone to bed in a barn when drunk, and smoked his pipe there; and so a barn was burnt. He had the reputation of being a clever man, had been there some three months waiting for his trial to come on, and would have to wait as much longer; but he was quite domesticated and contented, since he got his board for nothing, and thought that he was well treated.

He occupied one window, and I the other; and I saw that if one stayed there long, his principal business would be to look out the window. I had soon read all the tracts that were left there, and examined where former prisoners had broken out, and where a grate had been sawed off, and heard the history of the various occupants of that room; for I found that even here there was a history and a gossip which never circulated beyond the walls of the jail. Probably this is the only house in the town where verses are composed, which are afterward printed in circular form, but not published. I was shown quite a long list of verses which were composed by some young men who had been detected in an attempt to escape, who avenged themselves by singing them.

I pumped my fellow-prisoner as dry as I could, for fear I should never see him again; but at length he showed me which was my bed, and left me to blow out the lamp.

It was like traveling into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there for one night. It seemed to me that I never had heard the town clock strike before, nor the evening sounds of the village; for we slept with the windows open, which were inside the grating. It was to see my native village in the light of the Middle Ages, and our Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me. They were the voices of old burghers that I heard in the streets. I was an involuntary spectator and auditor of whatever was done and said in the kitchen of the adjacent village-inn,—a wholly new and rare experience to me. It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly inside of it. I never had seen its institutions before. This is one of the peculiar institutions; for it is a shire town. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about.

In the morning, our breakfasts were put through the hole in the door, in small oblong-square tin pans, made to fit, and holding a pint of chocolate, with brown bread, and an iron spoon. When they called for the vessels again, I was green enough to return what bread I had left; but my comrade seized it, and said that I should lay that up for

lunch or dinner. Soon after he was let out to work at haying in a neighboring field, whither he went every day, and would not be back till noon; so he bade me good-day, saying that he doubted if he should see me again.

When I came out of prison,—for some one interfered, and paid that tax,<sup>9</sup>—I did not perceive that great changes had taken place on the common, such as he observed who went in a youth and emerged a tottering and gray-headed man; and yet a change had to my eyes come over the scene,—the town, and State, and country,—greater than any that mere time could effect. I saw yet more distinctly the State in which I lived. I saw to what extent the people among whom I lived could be trusted as good neighbors and friends; that their friendship was for summer weather only; that they did not greatly propose to do right; that they were a distinct race from me by their prejudices and superstitions, as the Chinamen and Malays are; that in their sacrifices to humanity they ran no risks, not even to their property; that after all they were not so noble but they treated the thief as he had treated them, and hoped, by a certain outward observance and a few prayers, and by walking in a particular straight though useless path from time to time, to save their souls. This may be to judge my neighbors harshly; for I believe that many of them are not aware that they have such an institution as the jail in their village.

It was formerly the custom in our village, when a poor debtor came out of jail, for his acquaintances to salute him, looking through their fingers, which were crossed to represent the grating of a jail window, "How do ye do?" My neighbors did not thus salute me, but first looked at me, and then at one another, as if I had returned from a long journey. I was put into jail as I was going to the shoemaker's to get a shoe which was mended. When I was let out the next morning, I proceeded to finish my errand, and, having put on my mended shoe, joined a huckleberry party, who were impatient to put themselves under my conduct; and in half an hour,—for the horse was soon tackled,—was in the midst of a huckleberry field, on one of our highest hills, two miles off, and then the State was nowhere to be seen.

This is the whole history of "My Prisons."<sup>1</sup>

I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject; and as for supporting schools, I am doing my part to educate my fellow-countrymen now. It is for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the

9. It is legendary but unlikely that Emerson paid the tax. Family reminiscence ascribed the deed to his Aunt Maria.

1. English translation of the title *Le*

*mie prigioni* (1832), a record of his years of hard labor in Austrian prisons by Silvio Pellico (1789–1854), Italian poet, playwright, and patriot.



State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually. I do not care to trace the course of my dollar, if I could, till it buys a man or a musket to shoot one with,—the dollar is innocent,—but I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make what use and get what advantage of her I can, as is usual in such cases.

If others pay the tax which is demanded of me, from a sympathy with the State, they do but what they have already done in their own case, or rather they abet injustice to a greater extent than the State requires. If they pay the tax from a mistaken interest in the individual taxed, to save his property, or prevent his going to jail, it is because they have not considered wisely how far they let their private feelings interfere with the public good.

This, then, is my position at present. But one cannot be too much on his guard in such a case, lest his action be biased by obstinacy or an undue regard for the opinions of men. Let him see that he does only what belongs to himself and to the hour.

I think sometimes, Why, this people mean well, they are only ignorant; they would do better if they know how: why give your neighbors this pain to treat you as they are not inclined to? But I think again, This is no reason why I should do as they do, or permit others to suffer much greater pain of a different kind. Again, I sometimes say to myself, When many millions of men, without heat, without ill will, without personal feeling of any kind, demand of you a few shillings only, without the possibility, such is their constitution, of retracting or altering their present demand, and without the possibility, on your side, of appeal to any other millions, why expose yourself to this overwhelming brute force? You do not resist cold and hunger, the winds and the waves, thus obstinately; you quietly submit to a thousand similar necessities. You do not put your head into the fire. But just in proportion as I regard this as not wholly a brute force, but partly a human force, and consider that I have relations to those millions as to so many millions of men, and not of mere brute or inanimate things, I see that appeal is possible, first and instantaneously, from them to the Maker of them, and, secondly, from them to themselves. But if I put my head deliberately into the fire, there is no appeal to fire or to the Maker of fire, and I have only myself to blame. If I could convince myself that I have any right to be satisfied with men as they are, and to treat them accordingly, and not according, in some respects, to my requisitions and expectations of what they and I ought to be, then, like a good Mussulman and fatalist, I should endeavor to be satisfied with things as they are, and say it is the will of God. And, above all, there is this difference between resisting this and a purely brute or natural force, that I can resist this with some effect; but I cannot

expect, like Orpheus,<sup>2</sup> to change the nature of the rocks and trees and beasts.

I do not wish to quarrel with any man or nation. I do not wish to split hairs, to make fine distinctions, or set myself up as better than my neighbors. I seek rather, I may say, even an excuse for conforming to the laws of the land. I am but too ready to conform to them. Indeed, I have reason to suspect myself on this head; and each year, as the tax-gatherer comes round, I find myself disposed to review the acts and position of the general and State governments, and the spirit of the people, to discover a pretext for conformity.

“We must affect our country as our parents,  
And if at any time we alienate  
Our love or industry from doing it honor,  
We must respect effects and teach the soul  
Matter of conscience and religion,  
And not desire of rule or benefit.”

I believe that the State will soon be able to take all my work of this sort out of my hands, and then I shall be no better a patriot than my fellow-countrymen. Seen from a lower point of view, the Constitution, with all its faults, is very good; the law and the courts are very respectable; even this State and this American government are, in many respects, very admirable, and rare things, to be thankful for, such as a great many have described them; but seen from a point of view a little higher, they are what I have described them; seen from a higher still, and the highest, who shall say what they are, or that they are worth looking at or thinking of at all?

However, the government does not concern me much, and I shall bestow the fewest possible thoughts on it. It is not many moments that I live under a government, even in this world. If a man is thought-free, fancy-free, imagination-free, that which is *not* never for a long time appearing *to be* to him, unwise rulers or reformers cannot fatally interrupt him.

I know that most men think differently from myself; but those whose lives are by profession devoted to the study of these or kindred subjects content me as little as any. Statesmen and legislators, standing so completely within the institution, never distinctly and nakedly behold it. They speak of moving society, but have no resting-place without it. They may be men of a certain experience and discrimination, and have no doubt invented ingenious and even useful systems, for which we sincerely thank them; but all their wit and usefulness lie within certain not very wide limits. They are

2. Orpheus, a mythical Greek poet-musician, caused “rocks and trees and beasts” to follow the music of his lute.

wont to forget that the world is not governed by policy and expediency. Webster<sup>3</sup> never goes behind government, and so cannot speak with authority about it. His words are wisdom to those legislators who contemplate no essential reform in the existing government; but for thinkers, and those who legislate for all time, he never once glances at the subject. I know of those whose serene and wise speculations on this theme would soon reveal the limits of his mind's range and hospitality. Yet, compared with the cheap professions of most reformers, and the still cheaper wisdom and eloquence of politicians in general, his are almost the only sensible and valuable words, and we thank Heaven for him. Comparatively, he is always strong, original, and, above all, practical. Still, his quality is not wisdom, but prudence. The lawyer's truth is not Truth, but consistency or a consistent expediency. Truth is always in harmony with herself, and is not concerned chiefly to reveal the justice that may consist with wrong-doing. He well deserves to be called, as he has been called, the Defender of the Constitution. There are really no blows to be given by him but defensive ones. He is not a leader, but a follower. His leaders are the men of '87.<sup>4</sup> "I have never made an effort," he says, "and never propose to make an effort; I have never countenanced an effort, and never mean to countenance an effort, to disturb the arrangement as originally made, by which the various States came into the Union." Still thinking of the sanction which the Constitution gives to slavery, he says, "Because it was a part of the original compact,—let it stand." Notwithstanding his special acuteness and ability, he is unable to take a fact out of its merely political relations, and behold it as it lies absolutely to be disposed of by the intellect,—what, for instance, it behooves a man to do here in America to-day with regard to slavery,—but ventures, or is driven, to make some such desperate answer as the following, while professing to speak absolutely, and as a private man,—from which what new and singular code of social duties might be inferred? "The manner," says he, "in which the governments of those States where slavery exists are to regulate it is for their own consideration, under their responsibility to their constituents, to the general laws of propriety, humanity, and justice, and to God. Associations formed elsewhere, springing from a feeling of humanity, or any other cause, have nothing whatever to do with it. They have never received any encouragement from me, and they never will."

They who know of no purer sources of truth, who have traced up

3. Daniel Webster's respect for authority won him the title (mentioned later in this paragraph) "Defender of the Constitution"; he was therefore willing to compromise about slavery while it

was "constitutional," thus losing many northern supporters.

4. *I.e.*, the framers of the Constitution, which was sent to the states for ratification in 1787.

its stream no higher, stand, and wisely stand, by the Bible and the Constitution, and drink at it there with reverence and humility; but they who behold where it comes trickling into this lake or that pool, gird up their loins once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountain-head.

No man with a genius for legislation has appeared in America. They are rare in the history of the world. There are orators, politicians, and eloquent men, by the thousand; but the speaker has not yet opened his mouth to speak who is capable of settling the much-vexed questions of the day. We love eloquence for its own sake, and not for any truth which it may utter, or any heroism it may inspire. Our legislators have not yet learned the comparative value of free trade and of freedom, of union, and of rectitude, to a nation. They have no genius or talent for comparatively humble questions of taxation and finance, commerce and manufactures and agriculture. If we were left solely to the wordy wit of legislators in Congress for our guidance, uncorrected by the seasonable experience and the effectual complaints of the people, America would not long retain her rank among the nations. For eighteen hundred years, though perchance I have no right to say it, the New Testament has been written; yet where is the legislator who has wisdom and practical talent enough to avail himself of the light which it sheds on the science of legislation?

The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to,—for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well,—is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual. Even the Chinese philosopher was wise enough to regard the individual as the basis of the empire. Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suf-

ferred it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

1848

1849, 1866

### My Prayer<sup>3</sup>

Great God, I ask thee for no meaner pelf  
Than that I may not disappoint myself;  
That in my action I may soar as high  
As I can now discern with this clear eye.

And next in value, which thy kindness lends, 5  
That I may greatly disappoint my friends,  
Howe'er they think or hope that it may be,  
They may not dream how thou'st distinguished me;

That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,  
And my life practice more than my tongue saith; 10  
That my low conduct may not show,  
Nor my relenting lines,  
That I thy purpose did not know,  
Or overrated thy designs.

1842, 1866

### Rumors from an Aeolian Harp<sup>4</sup>

There is a vale which none hath seen,  
Where foot of man has never been,  
Such as here lives with toil and strife,  
An anxious and a sinful life.

There every virtue has its birth, 5  
Ere it descends upon the earth,  
And thither every deed returns,  
Which in the generous bosom burns.

3. The first appearance of this poem was its quotation, without title, in an article, "Prayers," by Emerson in *The Dial* for July, 1842. It reappeared in periodicals as "A Prayer" and "My Prayer" before Thoreau's death, and was first collected in the posthumous *A Yankee in Canada* (1866) as "Prayer." The following is the text of *Poems of Nature* (1895).

4. In the Greek myth, Aeolus possessed a harp played by the movement of the winds of heaven, over which the gods had granted him dominion. The sym-

bolic idea—that nature is the source of the artist's inspiration, is recalled in Thoreau's introductory comment for the poem: "Music is the sound of the universal laws promulgated. It is the only assured tone" ("Monday," in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, 1849). The poem first appeared, without the comment, in *The Dial* for October, 1842. The text is identical in *Poems of Nature* (1895) and *A Week* \* \* \*, as given here.

There love is warm, and youth is young,  
 And poetry is yet unsung, 10  
 For Virtue still adventures there,  
 And freely breathes her native air.

And ever, if you hearken well,  
 You still may hear its vesper bell,  
 And tread of high-souled men go by, 15  
 Their thoughts conversing with the sky.

1842, 1849

### The Inward Morning<sup>5</sup>

Packed in my mind lie all the clothes  
 Which outward nature wears,  
 And in its fashion's hourly change  
 It all things else repairs.

In vain I look for change abroad, 5  
 And can no difference find,  
 Till some new ray of peace uncalled  
 Illumes my inmost mind.

What is it gilds the trees and clouds,  
 And paints the heavens so gay, 10  
 But yonder fast-abiding light  
 With its unchanging ray?

Lo, when the sun streams through the wood,  
 Upon a winter's morn,  
 Where'er his silent beams intrude 15  
 The murky night is gone.

How could the patient pine have known  
 The morning breeze would come,  
 Or humble flowers anticipate  
 The insect's noonday hum,— 20

Till the new light with morning cheer  
 From far streamed through the aisles,  
 And nimbly told the forest trees  
 For many stretching miles?

I've heard within my inmost soul 25  
 Such cheerful morning news,

5. First published in *The Dial* for October, 1842, and reprinted in Thoreau's "Wednesday" chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849),

where the text is identical with that of *Poems of Nature* (1895) and that given here.

In the horizon of my mind  
 Have seen such orient hues,  
 As in the twilight of the dawn,  
 When the first birds awake, 30  
 Are heard within some silent wood,  
 Where they the small twigs break,  
 Or in the eastern skies are seen,  
 Before the sun appears,  
 The harbingers of summer heats 35  
 Which from afar he bears.

1842, 1849

Smoke<sup>9</sup>

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,<sup>1</sup>  
 Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight;  
 Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,  
 Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;  
 Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form 5  
 Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;  
 By night star-veiling, and by day  
 Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;  
 Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,  
 And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame. 10

1843, 1854

9. One of the vignettes captioned "Or-phics" published in *The Dial* for April, 1843, this was reprinted in "House-warming" in *Walden* (1854), following the sentence: "When the villagers were lighting their fires beyond the horizon, I too gave notice to the various wild inhabitants of Walden vale, by a smoky streamer from my chimney, that I was

awake." The *Walden* text is identical with that of *Poems of Nature*, except for a comma at the end of l. 2.

1. Daedalus, mythical artisan of the Greeks, escaped his enemies on wings made of feathers and wax, but Icarus, his son, melted his by flying too near the sun, and plunged to his death.



# The Humanitarian and Critical Temper

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HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

(1807-1882)

Longfellow was one of the most serious writers of his age, and although a poet, enormously popular. He combined considerable learning with an enlightened understanding of the people, and he expressed the lives and ideals of humbler Americans in poems that they could not forget. Amid the rising democracy of his day, Longfellow became the national bard. His more popular poems strongly reflected the optimistic sentiment and the love of a good lesson that characterized the humanitarian spirit of the people. Unfortunately for his reputation in the twentieth century, the surviving picture has been that of the gray old poet of "The Children's Hour," seated by the fire-side in the armchair made from "the spreading chestnut tree," a present from the children of Cambridge. Recent criticism has again emphasized the other Longfellow, well known to more discerning readers of his own day as the poet of "The Saga of

King Olaf" and *Christus*, the author of great ballads and of many sonnets and reflective lyrics remarkable for imaginative propriety and constructive skill. To be sure, the familiar spirit is always present in his work, and this is not the tradition admired today, but it too contributes to what in his writing is genuine, large, and enduring.

Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, on February 27, 1807, into a family of established tradition and moderate means. He attended Portland Academy and was tutored for admission to nearby Bowdoin College, which he entered in the sophomore class, a fellow student of Hawthorne. Having published his first poem at thirteen, two years earlier, he dreamed of "future eminence in literature." Upon his graduation in 1825, he accepted a professorship of foreign languages at Bowdoin, which included a provision for further preparatory study abroad. He visited France, Spain, Italy,



and Germany, returning to Bowdoin in the autumn of 1829. There he taught for six years, edited textbooks, and wrote articles on European literatures in the tradition of his profession. His reward was the offer of the Smith professorship at Harvard, which George Ticknor was vacating; and a leave of absence for further study of German. Meanwhile he had married (1831), and published in the *New England Magazine* the travel sketches which appeared as his first volume, *Outre Mer*, in 1835. The twenty months abroad (1835-1836), increased Longfellow's knowledge of Germanic and Scandinavian literatures, soon to become a deep influence upon his writing.

His young wife died during the journey, in November, 1835. With renewed dedication to the combined responsibilities of teacher and creative writer, at the dawn of the well-named "flowering of New England," Longfellow soon became a leading figure among the writers and scholars of that region. Hawthorne was now an intimate friend. Within three years he entered upon the decade of remarkable production (1839-1849) which gave him national prominence and the affection of his countrymen.

*Hyperion*, a prose romance, and *Voices of the Night*, his first collection of poems, both appeared in 1839. *Ballads and Other Poems* (December, 1841, dated 1842), containing "The Skeleton in Armor," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and "The Village Blacksmith," exactly expressed the popular spirit

of the day. *Poems on Slavery* (1842) was followed by *The Spanish Student* (1843), his first large treatment of a foreign theme.

Of more importance was *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems* (1845, dated 1846). Such poems as "Nuremberg" illustrate how the poet familiarized untraveled Americans with the European scene and culture. At the same time he was acquainting his countrymen with themselves in such poems as "The Arsenal at Springfield," "The Old Clock on the Stairs," and "The Arrow and the Song." His contribution to the epic of his country found its first large expression in *Evangeline* (1847), which aroused national enthusiasm for its pictorial vividness and narrative skill. *The Seaside and the Fireside* (1849, dated 1850) contained "The Building of the Ship," a powerful plea for national unity in the face of the mounting crises before the Civil War. Minor works of this period include a prose tale, *Kavanagh* (1849), and several anthologies of poetry and criticism.

After two decades of conflict between the writer and the teacher, he resigned his Harvard professorship to James Russell Lowell in 1854. But Craigie House, his home in Cambridge, remained no less a sort of literary capitol. Longfellow had lodged there on first going to Harvard, and it became his as a gift from Nathan Appleton, the Lowell industrialist whose daughter the poet had married in 1843.

In 1855, he published *The*

*Song of Hiawatha*, based on American Indian legends, and in 1858 *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, which popularized the legend of Plymouth Colony. These poems gave him an impregnable position in the affections of his countrymen, and increased his already wide recognition abroad. It is to be remembered that his appeal for the common reader in England was as great as at home, and rivaled that of Tennyson; a bust of Longfellow, the only American so honored, occupies a niche in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner.

In 1861, his beloved Frances Appleton, reputed heroine of *Hyperion* and eighteen years his wife, was burned to death. His deep religious feeling and his reflective spirit, present in his work from the beginning, now became dominant. He bent his energies upon two large works, earlier begun and laid aside. To the translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* he brought both a scholar's love and religious devotion. It appeared in three volumes (1865-1867), principally in unrhimed triplets, and it long remained a useful translation, although in most respects not an inspired one. However, *Christus, A Mystery* (1872) reveals at many points his highest inspiration. *The Golden Legend*, a cycle of religious miracle plays, ultimately Part II of *Christus*, had appeared in 1851. He now added Part III, *The New England Tragedies* (1868), two fine closet dramas dealing with the Puritan themes of "John Endicott" and "Giles Corey." Part I, published in 1871 as *The Di-*

*vine Tragedy*, dealt with Christ's life and Passion.

During these last twenty years the poet published several additional volumes, containing many of his most mature reflective lyrics. When *Tales of a Wayside Inn* appeared in 1863, his publishers prepared an unprecedented first edition of fifteen thousand copies. A second group of the *Tales* appeared in *Three Books of Song* (1872), and a third in *Aftermath* (1873). These famous *Tales* ranged from the level of "Paul Revere's Ride" to "The Saga of King Olaf," a high point of accomplishment. Among other volumes were *Flower-de-Luce* (1867), in which the sonnets "Divina Commedia" appeared as a sequence; *The Masque of Pandora* (1875); *Kéramos and Other Poems* (1878); *Ultima Thule* (1880); and *In the Harbor*, published in 1882, the year of his death.

Longfellow's lapses into didacticism and sentimentality reflected the flabbier romanticism of his age, but he has remained in the tradition and memory of the American people. Admiration for Longfellow today rests on his gift for narrative and his daring experiments in narrative verse, on his balladry, his popularization of the national epic, his naturalization of foreign themes and poetic forms, his ability to bring his erudition within the range of general understanding, his versatile and sensitive craftsmanship, and, perhaps beyond all else, on the large and endearing qualities of the man himself.

The standard text is the Riverside Edition of the *Complete Poetical and Prose Works*, 11 vols., edited by H. E. Scudder, 1886, with valuable notes, based in part on Samuel Longfellow's *Life*. The one-volume *Complete Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, 1893, is excellent, and available. More recent collections are the Craigie Edition, 11 vols., 1904, and the De Luxe Edition, 10 vols., 1909.

*The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2 vols., 1886, by the poet's

brother, Samuel Longfellow, is still the standard biography. The same author added a third volume, *Final Memorials*, in 1887. The best shorter biographies are T. W. Higginson, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, American Men of Letters Series, 1902; James T. Hatfield, *New Light on Longfellow, with Special Reference to his Relations with Germany*, 1933; Lawrence Thompson, *Young Longfellow*, 1938; and Edward Wagenknecht, *Longfellow* \* \* \*, 1955.

## Hymn to the Night<sup>3</sup>

Ἕσπασίη, τριλλίστος

I heard the trailing garments of the Night  
Sweep through her marble halls!

I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light  
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,  
Stoop o'er me from above;  
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,  
As of the one I love.

I heard the sounds of sorrow and delight,  
The manifold, soft chimes,  
That fill the haunted chambers of the Night,  
Like some old poet's rhymes.

From the cool cisterns of the midnight air  
My spirit drank repose;  
The fountain of perpetual peace flows there,—  
From those deep cisterns flows.

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear  
What man has borne before!  
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,  
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes-like<sup>4</sup> I breathe this prayer!  
Descend with broad-winged flight,

3. Written "in the summer of 1839," and published in December as the leading poem of the poet's first volume, *Voices of the Night*. The epigraph, translated "Welcome, thrice prayed for" (cf. l. 23) is from Homer's *Iliad*, Book VIII,

l. 488.

4. Orestes was pursued by the Furies for having killed his mother to avenge his father's murder. His discovery of "peace" is the subject of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.

The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most fair,  
The best-beloved Night!

1839

1839

### The Skeleton in Armor<sup>1</sup>

"Speak! speak! thou fearful guest  
Who, with thy hollow breast  
Still in rude armor drest,  
Comest to daunt me!  
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,  
But with thy fleshless palms  
Stretched, as if asking alms,  
Why dost thou haunt me?"

5

Then, from those cavernous eyes  
Pale flashes seemed to rise,  
As when the Northern skies  
Gleam in December;  
And, like the water's flow  
Under December's snow,  
Came a dull voice of woe  
From the heart's chamber.

10

15

"I was a Viking old!  
My deeds, though manifold,  
No Skald in song has told.  
No Saga taught thee!  
Take heed, that in thy verse  
Thou dost the tale rehearse,  
Else dread a dead man's curse;  
For this I sought thee.

20

"Far in the Northern Land,  
By the wild Baltic's strand,  
I, with my childish hand,  
Tamed the gerfalcon;<sup>2</sup>  
And, with my skates fast-bound,

25

1. This, like "The Wreck of the Hesperus," is an experiment in balladry. Its sources are older, representing the rough, two-beat measures of the verse of the Old English, Icelandic, and Norse skalds, or poets (*cf.* l. 19), which Longfellow had been studying, and used again in "The Saga of King Olaf." The story was Longfellow's response to the debated theories that an ancient stone

tower in Newport, and an "armored" skeleton unearthed and destroyed at Fall River, were relics of prehistoric Scandinavian settlement. Written in 1840, the poem appeared in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* for January, 1841, before being collected in *Ballads and Other Poems* that year.

2. A large Arctic falcon used in hunting.

Skimmed the half-frozen Sound, 30  
That the poor whimpering hound  
Trembled to walk on.

“Oft to his frozen lair  
Tracked I the grisly bear,  
While from my path the hare 35  
Fled like a shadow;  
Oft through the forest dark  
Followed the were-wolf’s bark,  
Until the soaring lark  
Sang from the meadow. 40

“But when I older grew,  
Joining a corsair’s crew,  
O’er the dark sea I flew  
With the marauders.  
Wild was the life we led; 45  
Many the souls that sped,  
Many the hearts that bled,  
By our stern orders.

“Many a wassail-bout  
Wore the long Winter out; 50  
Often our midnight shout  
Set the cocks crowing,  
As we the Berserk’s<sup>3</sup> tale  
Measured in cups of ale,  
Draining the oaken pail, 55  
Filled to o’erflowing.

“Once as I told in glee  
Tales of the stormy sea,  
Soft eyes did gaze on me,  
Burning yet tender; 60  
And as the white stars shine  
On the dark Norway pine,  
On that dark heart of mine  
Fell their soft splendor.

“I wooed the blue-eyed maid, 65  
Yielding, yet half afraid,  
And in the forest’s shade  
Our vows were plighted.  
Under its loosened vest  
Fluttered her little breast, 70

3. Berserkers were mythological Norse warriors of invulnerable fury in battle.

Like birds within their nest  
By the hawk frightened.

“Bright in her father’s hall  
Shields gleamed upon the wall,  
Loud sang the minstrels all, 75  
Chanting his glory;  
When of old Hildebrand  
I asked his daughter’s hand,  
Mute did the minstrels stand.  
To hear my story. 80

“While the brown ale he quaffed,  
Loud then the champion laughed,  
And as the wind-gusts waft  
The sea-foam brightly,  
So the loud laugh of scorn, 85  
Out of those lips unshorn,  
From the deep drinking-horn  
Blew the foam lightly.

“She was a Prince’s child,  
I but a Viking wild, 90  
And though she blushed and smiled,  
I was discarded!  
Should not the dove so white  
Follow the sea-mew’s<sup>4</sup> flight,  
Why did they leave that night 95  
Her nest unguarded?

“Scarce had I put to sea,  
Bearing the maid with me,  
Fairest of all was she  
Among the Norsemen! 100  
When on the white sea-strand,  
Waving his armed hand,  
Saw we old Hildebrand,  
With twenty horsemen.

“Then launched they to the blast, 105  
Bent like a reed each mast,  
Yet we were gaining fast,  
When the wind failed us;  
And with a sudden flaw

Came round the gusty Skaw,<sup>5</sup> 110  
So that our foe we saw  
Laugh as he hailed us.

“And as to catch the gale  
Round veered the flapping sail,  
‘Death!’ was the helmsman’s hail, 115  
‘Death without quarter!’  
Mid-ships with iron keel  
Struck we her ribs of steel;  
Down her black hulk did reel  
Through the black water! 120

“As with his wings aslant,  
Sails the fierce cormorant,  
Seeking some rocky haunt,  
With his prey laden,—  
So toward the open main, 125  
Beating to sea again,  
Through the wild hurricane,  
Bore I the maiden.

“Three weeks we westward bore,  
And when the storm was o’er 130  
Cloud-like we saw the shore  
Stretching to leeward;  
There for my lady’s bower  
Built I the lofty tower,<sup>6</sup>  
Which, to this very hour, 135  
Stands looking seaward.

“There lived we many years;  
Time dried the maiden’s tears;  
She had forgot her fears,  
She was a mother; 140  
Death closed her mild blue eyes,  
Under that tower she lies;  
Ne’er shall the sun arise  
On such another!

“Still grew my bosom then, 145  
Still as a stagnant fen!  
Hateful to me were men,  
The sunlight hateful!  
In the vast forest here,

5. The northernmost cape of Jutland, 6. *I.e.*, the Newport tower.  
Denmark.

Clad in my warlike gear, 150  
 Fell I upon my spear,  
 Oh, death was grateful!

“Thus, seamed with many scars,  
 Bursting these prison bars,  
 Up to its native stars 155  
 My soul ascended!

There from the flowing bowl  
 Deep drinks the warrior's soul,  
*Skool!* to the Northland! *skool!*”  
 Thus the tale ended. 160

1840

1841

Serenade<sup>8</sup>

Stars of the summer night!  
 Far in yon azure deeps,  
 Hide, hide your golden light!  
 She sleeps!  
 My lady sleeps! 5  
 Sleeps!

Moon of the summer night!  
 Far down yon western steeps,  
 Sink, sink in silver light!  
 She sleeps! 10  
 My lady sleeps!  
 Sleeps!

Wind of the summer night!  
 Where yonder woodbine creeps,  
 Fold, fold thy pinions light! 15  
 She sleeps!  
 My lady sleeps!  
 Sleeps!

Dreams of the summer night!  
 Tell her, her lover keeps 20  
 Watch! while in slumbers light  
 She sleeps!

7. “In Scandinavia, this is the customary salutation when drinking a health. \* \* \* ” [Longfellow's note].

8. This famous song, written in 1840, was published in September, 1842, in

*Graham's Magazine*, and in 1843 as part of the drama *The Spanish Student* (Act I, Scene 3, ll. 8 ff.), where it is sung below the bedroom balcony of Preciosa, by her lover, Victorian.



My lady sleeps!  
Sleeps!

1840

1842, 1843

### Mezzo Cammin<sup>9</sup>

WRITTEN AT BOPPARD ON THE RHINE AUGUST 25, 1842, JUST  
BEFORE LEAVING FOR HOME

Half of my life is gone, and I have let  
The years slip from me and have not fulfilled  
The aspiration of my youth, to build  
Some tower of song with lofty parapet.  
Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret 5  
Of restless passions that would not be stilled,  
But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,<sup>1</sup>  
Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;  
Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past  
Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,— 10  
A city in the twilight dim and vast,  
With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—  
And hear above me on the autumnal blast  
The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.

1842

[1845] 1846

### The Arsenal at Springfield<sup>2</sup>

This is the Arsenal. From floor to ceiling,  
Like a huge organ, rise the burnished arms;  
But from their silent pipes no anthem pealing  
Startles the villages with strange alarms.

Ah! what a sound will rise, how wild and dreary, 5  
When the death-angel touches those swift keys!

9. Among Longfellow's sonnets, this is notable for the effective irregularity of its extended last line. The words of the title appear in the first line of Dante's *Divine Comedy: Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, translated, "Midway upon the journey of our life." Like Dante when he wrote these lines, Longfellow had reached the mid-point of the biblical three score and ten years. The poem was collected in *The Belfry of Bruges*, dated 1846, but published on December 23, 1845.

1. Longfellow's first wife had died in 1835, during his previous trip abroad.

2. Longfellow and his second wife on their wedding journey in 1843 visited Springfield, Massachusetts, where the rows of guns on the walls of the arsenal suggested to the bride the organ pipes of death. The first International Peace Conference was meeting in London that year, and the next, 1844, saw the birth of the *Christian Citizen*, the first periodical devoted to the cause of peace. Longfellow responded with this poem in *Graham's Magazine*, April, 1844, and the next year collected it in *The Belfry of Bruges*.

What loud lament and dismal Misericere<sup>3</sup>  
 Will mingle with their awful symphonies!

I hear even now the infinite fierce chorus,  
 The cries of agony, the endless groan, 10  
 Which, through the ages that have gone before us,  
 In long reverberations reach our own.

On helm and harness rings the Saxon hammer,  
 'Through Cimbric<sup>4</sup> forest roars the Norseman's song,  
 And loud, amid the universal clamor, 15  
 O'er distant deserts sounds the Tartar gong.

I hear the Florentine, who from his palace  
 Wheels out his battle-bell with dreadful din,  
 And Aztec priests upon their teocallis<sup>5</sup>  
 Beat the wild war-drums made of serpent's skin; 20

The tumult of each sacked and burning village;  
 The shout that every prayer for mercy drowns;  
 The soldiers' revels in the midst of pillage;  
 The wail of famine in beleaguered towns;

The bursting shell, the gateway wrenched asunder, 25  
 The rattling musketry, the clashing blade;  
 And ever and anon, in tones of thunder,  
 The diapason of the cannonade.

Is it, O man, with such discordant noises,  
 With such accursed instruments as these, 30  
 Thou drownest Nature's sweet and kindly voices,  
 And jarrest the celestial harmonies?

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,  
 Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,  
 Given to redeem the human mind from error, 35  
 There were no need of arsenals or forts:

The warrior's name would be a name abhorred!  
 And every nation, that should lift again  
 Its hand against a brother, on its forehead  
 Would wear forevermore the curse of Cain! 40

Down the dark future, through long generations,  
 The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease;

3. A lyrical supplication for mercy; specifically, the first line of Psalm L, in the Latin Vulgate, used in the Catholic service: *Miserere mei Domine* ("Have mercy on me, Lord").

4. The Cimbri, originally Danish, long

opposed the Roman Empire.

5. Places of worship of Mexican and Central American Indians, the temple surmounting a truncated pyramidal mound.

And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,  
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, "Peace!"

Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals  
The blast of War's great organ shakes the skies!  
But beautiful as songs of the immortals,  
The holy melodies of love arise.

1844

1844. [1845] 1846

## The Building of the Ship<sup>1</sup>

"Build me straight, O worthy Master!  
Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,  
That shall laugh at all disaster,  
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!"

The merchant's word  
Delighted the Master heard;  
For his heart was in his work, and the heart  
Giveth grace unto every Art.  
A quiet smile played round his lips,  
As the eddies and dimples of the tide  
Play round the bows of ships,  
That steadily at anchor ride.  
And with a voice that was full of glee,  
He answered, "Ere long we will launch  
A vessel as goodly, and strong, and stanch,  
As ever weathered a wintry sea!"  
And first with nicest skill and art,  
Perfect and finished in every part,  
A little model the Master wrought,  
Which should be to the larger plan  
What the child is to the man,  
Its counterpart in miniature;

1. In November, 1849, "The Building of the Ship" appeared as the "leading piece" in *The Seaside and Fireside* (dated 1850). It was at once recognized as relating to the national disunity that had just reached its crisis with the Mexican War. The Compromise of 1850 had not yet effected an uneasy truce between the factions of North and South when the great Fanny Kemble read the poem, on February 12, to an audience "of more than three thousand" in Boston. It swept the country and remained an eloquent plea for the preservation of the Union. On a dark day of the Civil War, when Noah Brooks read it to

President Lincoln, "his eyes filled with tears, and \* \* \* he did not speak for some minutes, but finally said, with simplicity: 'It is a wonderful gift to be able to stir men like that.'" During World War II, Winston Churchill, in a speech referring to Allied unity, quoted part of the famous closing section. Longfellow acknowledged the inspiration of Schiller's *The Song of the Bell* for the form of this poem; certainly he was also inspired by his love of craftsmanship, and especially by his observation of the craft of the shipbuilder in the Portland Harbor of his boyhood.

That with a hand more swift and sure  
 The greater labor might be brought  
 To answer to his inward thought. 25  
 And as he labored, his mind ran o'er  
 The various ships that were built of yore,  
 And above them all, and strangest of all  
 Towered the Great Harry,<sup>2</sup> crank and tall,  
 Whose picture was hanging on the wall, 30  
 With bows and stern raised high in air,  
 And balconies hanging here and there,  
 And signal lanterns and flags afloat,  
 And eight round towers, like those that frown  
 From some old castle, looking down 35  
 Upon the drawbridge and the moat.  
 And he said with a smile, "Our ship, I wis,  
 Shall be of another form than this!"  
 It was of another form, indeed;  
 Built for freight, and yet for speed, 40  
 A beautiful and gallant craft;  
 Broad in the beam, that the stress of the blast,  
 Pressing down upon sail and mast,  
 Might not the sharp bows overwhelm;  
 Broad in the beam, but sloping aft 45  
 With graceful curve and slow degrees,  
 That she might be docile to the helm,  
 And that the currents of parted seas,  
 Closing behind, with mighty force,  
 Might aid and not impede her course. 50

In the ship-yard stood the Master,  
 With the model of the vessel,  
 That should laugh at all disaster,  
 And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!

Covering many a rood of ground, 55  
 Lay the timber piled around;  
 Timber of chestnut, and elm, and oak,  
 And scattered here and there, with these,  
 The knarred<sup>3</sup> and crooked cedar knees;  
 Brought from regions far away, 60  
 From Pascagoula's sunny bay,<sup>4</sup>  
 And the banks of the roaring Roanoke!<sup>5</sup>

2. Famous war vessel, built in 1488 by Henry VII, first Tudor King of England (1485-1509), whose marriage in 1486 united the warring Houses of Lancaster and York.

3. Gnarled, knotty.

4. Mouth of the Pascagoula River, at the eastern extremity of the gulf coast of Mississippi.

5. The Roanoke flows through Virginia and northern North Carolina, emptying in Albemarle Sound.

Ah! what a wondrous thing it is  
To note how many wheels of toil  
One thought, one word, can set in motion! 65  
There's not a ship that sails the ocean,  
But every climate, every soil,  
Must bring its tribute, great or small,  
And help to build the wooden wall!

The sun was rising o'er the sea, 70  
And long the level shadows lay.  
As if they, too, the beams would be  
Of some great, airy argosy,  
Framed and launched in a single day.  
That silent architect, the sun, 75  
Had hewn and laid them every one,  
Ere the work of man was yet begun.  
Beside the Master, when he spoke,  
A youth, against an anchor leaning,  
Listened, to catch his slightest meaning, 80  
Only the long waves, as they broke  
In ripples on the pebbly beach,  
Interrupted the old man's speech.

Beautiful they were, in sooth,  
The old man and the fiery youth! 85  
The old man, in whose busy brain  
Many a ship that sailed the main  
Was modelled o'er and o'er again;—  
The fiery youth, who was to be  
The heir of his dexterity, 90  
The heir of his house, and his daughter's hand,  
When he had built and launched from land  
What the elder head had planned.

"Thus," said he, "will we build this ship!  
Lay square the blocks upon the slip, 95  
And follow well this plan of mine.  
Choose the timbers with greatest care;  
Of all that is unsound beware;  
For only what is sound and strong  
To this vessel shall belong. 100  
Cedar of Maine and Georgia pine  
Here together shall combine.  
A goodly frame, and a goodly fame,  
And the UNION be her name!  
For the day that gives her to the sea 105  
Shall give my daughter unto thee!"

The Master's word  
 Enraptured the young man heard;  
 And as he turned his face aside,  
 With a look of joy and a thrill of pride 110  
 Standing before  
 Her father's door,  
 He saw the form of his promised bride.  
 The sun shone on her golden hair,  
 And her cheek was glowing fresh and fair, 115  
 With the breath of morn and the soft sea air.  
 Like a beauteous barge was she,  
 Still at rest on the sandy beach,  
 Just beyond the billow's reach;  
 But he 120  
 Was the restless, seething, stormy sea!  
 Ah, how skilful grows the hand  
 That obeyeth Love's command!  
 It is the heart, and not the brain,  
 That to the highest doth attain, 125  
 And he who followeth Love's behest  
 Far excelleth all the rest!  
 Thus with the rising of the sun  
 Was the noble task begun,  
 And soon throughout the ship-yard's bounds 130  
 Were heard the intermingled sounds  
 Of axes and of mallets, plied  
 With vigorous arms on every side;  
 Plied so deftly and so well,  
 That, ere the shadows of evening fell, 135  
 The keel of oak for a noble ship,  
 Scarfed<sup>6</sup> and bolted, straight and strong,  
 Was lying ready, and stretched along  
 The blocks, well placed upon the slip.  
 Happy, thrice happy, every one 140  
 Who sees his labor well begun,  
 And not perplexed and multiplied,  
 By idly waiting for time and tide!  
  
 And when the hot, long day was o'er,  
 The young man at the Master's door 145  
 Sat with the maiden calm and still,  
 And within the porch, a little more  
 Removed beyond the evening chill,

6. Jointed. Two timbers bearing weight in a continuous line, as in a keel, are

scarfed by halved and overlapped ends spliced together by bolts.

The father sat, and told them tales  
Of wrecks in the great September gales, 150  
Of pirates coasting the Spanish Main,  
And ships that never came back again,  
The chance and change of a sailor's life,  
Want and plenty, rest and strife,  
His roving fancy, like the wind, 155  
That nothing can stay and nothing can bind,  
And the magic charm of foreign lands,  
With shadows of palms, and shining sands,  
Where the tumbling surf,  
O'er the coral reefs of Madagascar, 160  
Washes the feet of the swarthy Lascar,  
As he lies alone and asleep on the turf.  
And the trembling maiden held her breath  
At the tales of that awful, pitiless sea,  
With all its terror and mystery, 165  
The dim, dark sea, so like unto Death,  
That divides and yet unites mankind!  
And whenever the old man paused, a gleam  
From the bowl of his pipe would awhile illumine  
The silent group in the twilight gloom, 170  
And thoughtful faces, as in a dream;  
And for a moment one might mark  
What had been hidden by the dark,  
That the head of the maiden lay at rest,  
Tenderly, on the young man's breast! 175  
Day by day the vessel grew,  
With timbers fashioned strong and true,  
Stemson and keelson and sternson-knee,<sup>7</sup>  
'Till, framed with perfect symmetry,  
A skeleton ship rose up to view! 180  
And around the bows and along the side  
The heavy hammers and mallets plied,  
Till after many a week, at length,  
Wonderful for form and strength,  
Sublime in its enormous bulk, 185  
Loomed aloft the shadowy hulk!  
And around it columns of smoke, upwreathing,  
Rose from the boiling, bubbling, seething  
Caldron, that glowed,  
And overflowed 190

7. In the fundamental "frame" of a ship, the keelson (kelson) is the principal longitudinal supporting member of the keel; the stemson is the upright sup-

port of the timbers at the bow; the sternson-knee is the after end (rear) of the keelson, fitted to support the upright sternpost.

With the black tar, heated for the sheathing.  
 And amid the clamors  
 Of clattering hammers,  
 He who listened heard now and then  
 The song of the Master and his men:—

195

“Build me straight, O worthy Master,  
 Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,  
 That shall laugh at all disaster,  
 And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!”

With oaken brace and copper band,  
 Lay the rudder on the sand,  
 That, like a thought, should have control  
 Over the movement of the whole;  
 And near it the anchor, whose giant hand  
 Would reach down and grapple with the land,  
 And immovable and fast  
 Hold the great ship against the bellowing blast!  
 And at the bows an image stood,  
 By a cunning artist carved in wood,  
 With robes of white, that far behind  
 Seemed to be fluttering in the wind.  
 It was not shaped in a classic mould,  
 Not like a Nymph or Goddess of old,  
 Or Naiad rising from the water,  
 But modelled from the Master's daughter!  
 On many a dreary and misty night,  
 'Twill be seen by the rays of the signal light,  
 Speeding along through the rain and the dark,  
 Like a ghost in its snow-white sark,<sup>8</sup>  
 The pilot of some phantom bark,  
 Guiding the vessel, in its flight,  
 By a path none other knows aright!  
 Behold, at last,  
 Each tall and tapering mast  
 Is swung into its place;  
 Shrouds and stays  
 Holding it firm and fast!<sup>9</sup>

200

205

210

215

220

225

Long ago,  
 In the deer-haunted forests of Maine,  
 When upon mountain and plain

230

8. Shroud.

9. Longfellow carefully notes “that sometimes \* \* \* vessels are launched fully sparred and rigged \* \* \* in order to save time, and to make a show.” He

begs the exception “as better suited to my purpose than the general rule”; citing instances in New York, and in Maine at Portland and Ellsworth.



Lay the snow,  
They fell,—those lordly pines!  
Those grand, majestic pines!  
'Mid shouts and cheers  
The jaded steers, 235  
Panting beneath the goad,  
Dragged down the weary, winding road  
Those captive kings so straight and tall,  
To be shorn of their streaming hair,  
And naked and bare, 240  
To feel the stress and the strain  
Of the wind and the reeling main,  
Whose roar  
Would remind them forevermore  
Of their native forests they should not see again. 245  
And everywhere  
The slender, graceful spars  
Poise aloft in the air,  
And at the mast-head,  
White, blue, and red, 250  
A flag unrolls the stripes and stars.  
Ah! when the wanderer, lonely, friendless,  
In foreign harbors shall behold  
That flag unrolled,  
'Twill be as a friendly hand 255  
Stretched out from his native land,  
Filling his heart with memories sweet and endless!  
All is finished! and at length  
Has come the bridal day  
Of beauty and strength. 260  
Today the vessel shall be launched!  
With fleecy clouds the sky is blanched,  
And o'er the bay,  
Slowly, in all his splendors dight,  
The great sun rises to behold the sight. 265  
The ocean old,  
Centuries old,  
Strong as youth, and as uncontrolled,  
Paces restless to and fro,  
Up and down the sands of gold. 270  
His beating heart is not at rest;  
And far and wide,  
With ceaseless flow,  
His beard of snow

Heaves with the heaving of his breast. 275  
 He waits impatient for his bride.

There she stands,  
 With her foot upon the sands,  
 Decked with flags and streamers gay,  
 In honor of her marriage day, 280  
 Her snow-white signals fluttering, blending,  
 Round her like a veil descending,  
 Ready to be  
 The bride of the gray old sea.

On the deck another bride 285  
 Is standing by her lover's side.  
 Shadows from the flag and shrouds,  
 Like the shadows cast by clouds,  
 Broken by many a sudden fleck,  
 Fall around them on the deck. 290

The prayer is said,  
 The service read,  
 The joyous bridegroom bows his head;  
 And in tears the good old Master  
 Shakes the brown hand of his son, 295  
 Kisses his daughter's glowing cheek  
 In silence, for he cannot speak,  
 And ever faster

Down his own the tears begin to run.  
 The worthy pastor— 300  
 The shepherd of that wandering flock,  
 That has the ocean for its wold,  
 That has the vessel for its fold,

Leaping ever from rock to rock—  
 Spake, with accents mild and clear, 305  
 Words of warning, words of cheer,  
 But tedious to the bridegroom's ear.

He knew the chart  
 Of the sailor's heart,  
 All its pleasures and its griefs, 310  
 All its shallows and rocky reefs,  
 All those secret currents, that flow  
 With such resistless undertow,  
 And lift and drift, with terrible force,  
 The will from its moorings and its course. 315  
 Therefore he spake, and thus<sup>1</sup> said he:—

1. Pastors of sailors' churches, endeared in the tradition of New England wooden ships and whaling, are typified by the famous Father Taylor of the Seamen's

Bethel of Boston, whose sea-savored sermons are recalled in that below, as also in that of Melville's Father Mapple (*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 9).

"Like unto ships far off at sea,  
 Outward or homeward bound, are we.  
 Before, behind, and all around,  
 Floats and swings the horizon's bound, 320  
 Seems at its distant rim to rise  
 And climb the crystal wall of the skies,  
 And then again to turn and sink,  
 As if we could slide from its outer brink.  
 Ah! it is not the sea, 325  
 It is not the sea that sinks and shelves,  
 But ourselves  
 That rock and rise  
 With endless and uneasy motion,  
 Now touching the very skies, 330  
 Now sinking into the depths of ocean.  
 Ah! if our souls but poise and swing  
 Like the compass in its brazen ring,  
 Ever level and ever true  
 To the toil of the task we have to do, 335  
 We shall sail securely, and safely reach  
 The Fortunate Isles,<sup>2</sup> on whose shining beach  
 The sights we see, and the sounds we hear,  
 Will be those of joy and not of fear!"

Then the Master, 340  
 With a gesture of command,  
 Waved his hand;  
 And at the word,  
 Loud and sudden there was heard,  
 All around them and below, 345  
 The sound of hammers, blow on blow,  
 Knocking away the shores and spurs.<sup>3</sup>  
 And see! she stirs!  
 She starts,—she moves,—she seems to feel  
 The thrill of life along her keel, 350  
 And, spurning with her foot the ground,  
 With one exulting, joyous bound,  
 She leaps into the ocean's arms!  
 And lo! from the assembled crowd  
 There rose a shout, prolonged and loud, 355  
 That to the ocean seemed to say,  
 "Take her, O bridegroom, old and gray,  
 Take her to thy protecting arms,  
 With all her youth and all her charms!"

2. Established by Vergil's "fortunate isle" as journey's end, or paradise; cf. *Acneid*, Book VI, l. 639.

3. Carpenter's terms for the props and braces that hold the vessel in the slip.

How beautiful she is! How fair 360  
 She lies within those arms, that press  
 Her form with many a soft caress  
 Of tenderness and watchful care!  
 Sail forth into the sea, O ship!  
 Through wind and wave, right onward steer! 365  
 'The moistened eye, the trembling lip,  
 Are not the signs of doubt or fear.  
 Sail forth into the sea of life,  
 O gentle, loving, trusting wife,  
 And safe from all adversity 370  
 Upon the bosom of that sea  
 Thy comings and thy goings be!  
 For gentleness and love and trust  
 Prevail o'er angry wave and gust;  
 And in the wreck of noble lives 375  
 Something immortal still survives!

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!  
 Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!  
 Humanity with all its fears,  
 With all the hopes of future years, 380  
 Is hanging breathless on thy fate!  
 We know what Master laid thy keel,  
 What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,  
 Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,  
 What anvils rang, what hammers beat, 385  
 In what a forge and what a heat  
 Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!  
 Fear not each sudden sound and shock,  
 'Tis of the wave and not the rock;  
 'Tis but the flapping of the sail, 390  
 And not a rent made by the gale!  
 In spite of rock and tempest's roar,  
 In spite of false lights on the shore,  
 Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!  
 Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee, 395  
 Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,  
 Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,  
 'Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

## The Jewish Cemetery at Newport<sup>4</sup>

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their graves,  
Close by the street of this fair scaport town,  
Silent beside the never-silent waves,  
At rest in all this moving up and down!

The trees are white with dust, that o'er their sleep 5  
Wave their broad curtains in the southwind's breath,  
While underneath these leafy tents they keep  
The long, mysterious Exodus of Death.<sup>5</sup>

And these sepulchral stones, so old and brown,  
That pave with level flags their burial-place. 10  
Seem like the tablets of the Law, thrown down  
And broken by Moses at the mountain's base.<sup>6</sup>

The very names recorded here are strange,  
Of foreign accent, and of different climes;  
Alvares and Rivera<sup>7</sup> interchange 15  
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.

"Blessed be God! for he created Death!"  
The mourners said, "and Death is rest and peace:"  
Then added, in the certainty of faith,  
"And giveth Life that nevermore shall cease." 20

Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,  
No Psalms of David now the silence break,  
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue  
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.

Gone are the living, but the dead remain, 25  
And not neglected; for a hand unseen,  
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,  
Still keeps their graves and their remembrance green.

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,  
What persecution, merciless and blind, 30

4. In his diary for July 9, 1852, at Newport, Rhode Island, the poet wrote: "Went this morning into the Jewish burying-ground \* \* \* There are few graves; nearly all are low tombstones of marble with Hebrew inscriptions, and a few words added in English or Portuguese. \* \* \* It is a shady nook, at the corner of two dusty, frequented streets, with an iron fence and a granite gateway \* \* \* " The poem was written in the difficult stanza of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

Longfellow's poem appeared in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* for July, 1854, and was included in the "Birds of Passage" section of *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858).

5. Exodus, second book of the Old Testament, records the migration of the Israelites from Egypt under Moses.

6. Cf. Exodus xxxii: 19.

7. The majority of the colonial Jewish families of New England were traders from Portugal or Spain.

Drove o'er the sea—that desert desolate—  
 These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?<sup>8</sup>

They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,  
 Ghetto and Judenstrass,<sup>9</sup> in mirk and mire;  
 Taught in the school of patience to endure 35  
 The life of anguish and the death of fire.

All their lives long, with the unleavened bread  
 And bitter herbs of exile and its fears,  
 The wasting famine of the heart they fed,  
 And slaked its thirst with marah<sup>1</sup> of their tears. 40

Anathema maranatha!<sup>2</sup> was the cry  
 That rang from town to town, from street to street;  
 At every gate the accursed Mordecai<sup>3</sup>  
 Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by Christian feet.

Pride and humiliation hand in hand 45  
 Walked with them through the world where'er they went;  
 Trampled and beaten were they as the sand,  
 And yet unshaken as the continent.

For in the background figures vague and vast  
 Of patriarchs and of prophets rose sublime, 50  
 And all the great traditions of the Past  
 They saw reflected in the coming time.

And thus forever with reverted look  
 The mystic volume of the world they read,  
 Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book, 55  
 Till life became a Legend of the Dead.

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!  
 The groaning earth in travail and in pain  
 Brings forth its races, but does not restore,  
 And the dead nations never rise again. 60

1852

1854, 1858

8. Abraham's concubine, Hagar, and her son, Ishmael, were exiled when his aged wife, Sarah, bore Isaac (Genesis xvi and xxi).

9. Like "ghetto," *Judenstrass* (German, "street of Jews") refers to a restricted urban area designated for Jews.

1. Hebrew, "bitterness." Marah was a spring of bitter, undrinkable water found by the famishing Israelites in the wilderness. Cf. Exodus xv: 23-26.

2. Cf. I Corinthians xvi: 22. St. Paul's

terms, *Anathema* (Greek, "devoted to destruction") *Maran 'atha* (Aramaic, "at the coming of the Lord"), were applied to all those who "love not the Lord Jesus Christ"; later they were applied specifically to the Jews.

3. Haman and his friends, jealous of the advancement of the Jew Mordecai, attempted to obtain a decree for the destruction of all Jews in the realm of the Persian king Ahasuerus. See Esther iii.

# My Lost Youth<sup>4</sup>

Often I think of the beautiful town  
 That is seated by the sea;<sup>5</sup>  
 Often in thought go up and down  
 The pleasant streets of that dear old town,  
 And my youth comes back to me. 5  
 And a verse of a Lapland song  
 Is haunting my memory still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."<sup>6</sup>  
 I can see the shadowy lines of its trees, 10  
 And catch, in sudden gleams,  
 The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,  
 And islands that were the Hesperides<sup>7</sup>  
 Of all my boyish dreams.  
 And the burden of that old song, 15  
 Its murmurs and whispers still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."  
 I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
 And the sea-tides tossing free; 20  
 And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,  
 And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
 And the magic of the sea.  
 And the voice of that wayward song  
 Is singing and saying still: 25  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

4. Like "The Building of the Ship," this poem contains "a memory of Portland, — my native town, the city by the sea," as Longfellow noted in his diary on March 29, 1855. The next day, he continued, "Wrote the poem; and am rather pleased with it, and with the bringing in of the two lines of the old Lapland song." He was referring to the two-line refrain ending each stanza. These words became so familiar that, as late as 1913, Robert Frost could call his first volume *A Boy's Will*, and be understood. Longfellow's poem appeared in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* for August, 1855, and was included among the "other poems" of the *Courtship of Miles Standish* volume (1858).

5. In his diary Longfellow associates these words with those of Francesca in Dante's *Inferno*, v, 97-98: "Sieda la terra dove nato fui / Sulla marina." (The city where I was born is situated on the seashore.)

6. The Cambridge *Complete Poetical Works* reports the source of this refrain as John Scheffer's *History of Lapland* (Oxford, 1674), where occur the lines: "A Youth's desire is the desire of the wind, / All his essays / Are long delays, / No issue can they find."

7. The mythical garden of the golden apples which Ge (the earth) gave Hera, queen of the gods, on her marriage to Zeus.

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,  
 And the fort upon the hill;<sup>8</sup>  
 The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar,  
 The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,  
 And the bugle wild and shrill.

And the music of that old song  
 Throbs in my memory still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."<sup>30</sup>

I remember the sea-fight far away,"  
 How it thundered o'er the tide!  
 And the dead captains, as they lay  
 In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay  
 Where they in battle died.

And the sound of that mournful song  
 Goes through me with a thrill:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."<sup>40</sup>

I can see the breezy dome of groves,  
 The shadows of Deering's Woods;  
 And the friendships old and the early loves  
 Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves  
 In quiet neighborhoods.

And the verse of that sweet old song,  
 It flutters and murmurs still:  
 "A boys will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."<sup>50</sup>

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart  
 Across the school-boy's brain;  
 The song and the silence in the heart,  
 That in part are prophecies, and in part  
 Are longings wild and vain.

And the voice of that fitful song  
 Sings on, and is never still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."<sup>55</sup>

8. Years before, in 1846, Longfellow noted in his diary a walk around "Munjoy's Hill and Fort St. Lawrence." There he "lay down in one of the embrasures and listened to the lashing, lulling sound of the sea just at my feet. \* \* \* the harbor was full of white sails \* \* \* Meditated a poem on the old Fort." But no poem resulted at that time.

9. "This was the engagement between the [American] *Enterprise* and [British] *Boxer* off the harbor of Portland, in which both captains were slain. They were buried side by side in the cemetery on Mountjoy [Munjoy Hill]" [Longfellow's note]. The *Enterprise* won this battle (1813), which Longfellow, a boy of six, may have seen; he is reported as witnessing the burial of the captains.



There are things of which I may not speak;  
 There are dreams that cannot die; 65  
 There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,  
 And bring a pallor into the cheek,  
 And a mist before the eye.  
 And the words of that fatal song  
 Come over me like a chill: 70  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."  
 Strange to me now are the forms I meet  
 When I visit the dear old town;  
 But the native air is pure and sweet, 75  
 And the trees that o'crshadow each well-known street,  
 As they balance up and down,  
 Are singing the beautiful song,  
 Are sighing and whispering still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will, 80  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."  
 And Deering's Woods are fresh and fair,  
 And with joy that is almost pain  
 My heart goes back to wander there,  
 And among the dreams of the days that were, 85  
 I find my lost youth again.  
 And the strange and beautiful song,  
 The groves are repeating it still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts." 90

1855 1855, 1858

## Divina Commedia<sup>9</sup>

### I

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door  
 A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,  
 Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet  
 Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor  
 Kneel to repeat his paternoster<sup>1</sup> o'er;

9. After his second wife was burned to death in 1861, Longfellow found relief in his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Volume I, *Inferno*, appeared in 1865, introduced by two sonnets. In the complete translation (1867), six sonnets were distributed as introductory pieces, two for each volume. They appeared first, however, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1864, and November,

1866. As a sequence of sonnets they were first published in the volume *Flower-de-Luce* (1867). In these masterpieces of sonnet literature, the poet's experience of Dante and his great religious poem is identified with the personal tragedy of his wife's death in the flames.  
 1. Translated "our Father"; i.e., the Lord's Prayer.

Far off the noises of the world retreat;  
 The loud vociferations of the street  
 Become an undistinguishable roar.  
 So, as I enter here from day to day,  
 And leave my burden at this minster gate, 10  
 Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,  
 The tumult of the time disconsolate  
 To inarticulate murmurs dies away,  
 While the eternal ages watch and wait.

## III

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom  
 Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!<sup>5</sup>  
 And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine.  
 The air is filled with some unknown perfume;  
 The congregation of the dead make room 5  
 For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;  
 Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's<sup>6</sup> groves of pine  
 The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.  
 From the confessionals I hear arise  
 Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies, 10  
 And lamentations from the crypts below;  
 And then a voice celestial that begins  
 With the pathetic words, "Although your sins  
 As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."<sup>7</sup>

## IV

With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,  
 She stands before thee, who so long ago  
 Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe  
 From which thy song and all its splendors came;<sup>8</sup>  
 And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy name, 5  
 The ice about thy heart melts as the snow  
 On mountain heights, and in swift overflow  
 Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.  
 Thou makest full confession; and a gleam,  
 As of the dawn on some dark forest cast, 10  
 Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;  
 Lethe and Eunoë<sup>9</sup>—the remembered dream  
 And the forgotten sorrow—bring at last  
 That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

5. Referring to the grave and solemn tone of Dante.

6. Dante often expressed fondness for Ravenna, where he was buried.

7. Cf. Isaiah i: 18, and Dante, *Purgatorio*, xxxi, 98.

8. Dante experiences visionary union

with the dead Beatrice in both the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*.

9. In the *Purgatorio*, Dante drinks the waters of two rivers: Lethe, providing forgetfulness; and Eunoë, giving memory of the good.

VI

O star of morning and of liberty!<sup>4</sup>  
 O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines  
 Above the darkness of the Apennines,  
 Forerunner of the day that is to be!  
 The voices of the city and the sea, 5  
 The voices of the mountains and the pines,  
 Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines  
 Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!  
 Thy flame is blown abroad from all the heights,  
 Through all the nations, and a sound is heard, 10  
 As of a mighty wind, and men devout,  
 Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,  
 In their own language hear thy wondrous word,  
 And many are amazed and many doubt.

1864-1867

1865-1867

Chaucer

An old man in a lodge within a park;  
 The chamber walls depicted all around  
 With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,  
 And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,  
 Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark 5  
 Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;  
 He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,  
 Then writeth in a book like any clerk.<sup>5</sup>  
 He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote  
 The Canterbury Tales, and his old age 10  
 Made beautiful with song; and as I read  
 I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note  
 Of lark and linnet, and from every page  
 Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.

1873

1875

Keats

The young Endymion sleeps Endymion's sleep;<sup>7</sup>  
 The shepherd-boy whose tale was left half told!

4. The familiar concept of Dante as morning star of a new democratic freedom especially for Italy.

5. A scholar. Cf. Chaucer's "Clerk of Oxenford," one of the most appealing characters of the *Canterbury Tales*.

7. Keats is often fancifully identified with the hero of his *Endymion*, a shepherd lad of Greek mythology, beloved of Selene (the moon), who cast eternal sleep upon him that he might be unaware of her caresses.

The solemn grove uplifts its shield of gold  
 To the red rising moon, and loud and deep  
 The nightingale is singing from the steep; 5  
 It is midsummer, but the air is cold;  
 Can it be death? Alas, beside the fold  
 A shepherd's pipe lies shattered near his sheep.  
 Lo! in the moonlight gleams a marble white,  
 On which I read: "Here lieth one whose name 10  
 Was writ in water."<sup>8</sup> And was this the meed  
 Of his sweet singing? Rather let me write:  
 "The smoking flax before it burst to flame  
 Was quenched by death, and broken the bruised reed."<sup>9</sup>  
 1873 1875

Nature<sup>1</sup>

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,  
 Leads by the hand her little child to bed,  
 Half willing, half reluctant to be led,  
 And leave his broken playthings on the floor,  
 Still gazing at them through the open door, 5  
 Nor wholly reassured and comforted  
 By promises of others in their stead,  
 Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;  
 So Nature deals with us, and takes away  
 Our playthings one by one, and by the hand 10  
 Leads us to rest so gently, that we go  
 Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,  
 Being too full of sleep to understand  
 How far the unknown transcends the what we know.  
 1875

## The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
 The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;<sup>2</sup>

8. Keats composed this as his own epitaph (writing "lies," not "lieth"), and directed that it be inscribed on his tombstone.

9. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isaiah xlii: 3).

1. This sonnet, famous for its fusion of simplicity with profound sentiment, appeared in the volume *The Masque of Pandora* (1875).

2. The cry of the curlew along the shore must suggest evening for anyone with a seashore boyhood. This allegory of the evening of life, simple, yet strong, and deeply felt, stands high among Longfellow's many treatments of the theme at this time, such as "Nature" and "Ultima Thule." Appropriately, this poem appeared in the volume *Ultima Thule* (1880).

Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
The traveller hastens toward the town,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls. 5

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,  
Efface the footprints in the sands,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls. 10

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
The day returns, but nevermore  
Returns the traveller to the shore,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls. 15

1879

1880

## Ultima Thule

DEDICATION: TO G. W. G.<sup>4</sup>

With favoring winds, o'er sunlit seas,  
We sailed for the Hesperides,<sup>5</sup>  
The land where golden apples grow;  
But that, ah! that was long ago.

How far since then the ocean streams 5  
Have swept us from the land of dreams,  
That land of fiction and of truth,  
The lost Atlantis<sup>6</sup> of our youth!

Whither, ah, whither? are not these 10  
The tempest-haunted Orcades,<sup>7</sup>  
Where sea-gulls scream, and breakers roar,  
And wreck and sea-weed line the shore?

Ultima Thule! Utmost Isle!  
Here in thy harbors for awhile  
We lower our sails, awhile we rest 15  
From the unending endless quest.

1879

1880

4. The volume *Ultima Thule* (1880), was dedicated, in this poem, to George Washington Greene, a friend with whom, in young manhood, Longfellow had shared confessions of goals and aspirations in life. *Ultima Thule*, to ancient navigators, suggested the northernmost limits of the habitable world, the ultimate journey's end.

5. The Hesperides were the "blessed

Isles" of Greek myth, where the golden apples grew which Ge (the earth) gave to Hera as a wedding gift.

6. A fabulous land of wealth and happiness which, the ancients believed, had sunk into the sea.

7. A variant text gives "Hebrides"; like the Orcades these are islands off the Scottish coast, and were, to the ancient Greeks, "tempest-haunted."

## JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

(1807-1892)

Longfellow became a poet of the people by choice and by nature, but Whittier was fitted for that rôle also by all the circumstances of his early experience and family tradition. The Whittiers had farmed along the Merrimack, almost within sight of the sea, since the days of Thomas Whittier, who in 1648 cleared the farmstead near Haverhill, Massachusetts, where the poet was born in 1807. The family immortalized in *Snow-Bound* was frugal by necessity, but also by conviction, for the Quaker way of life, to which the Whittiers were devoted, was one of simplicity, piety, and social responsibility. Although Whittier's opportunities were severely limited, the responsibility for study and expression was a Quaker tradition; the imagination of the young poet was nourished on the impassioned mysticism and moral earnestness of the classic journals of early Friends, on the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*, and on the few books that chance brought to a country farmhouse. Less by chance than by destiny, as it seems, the schoolmaster, Joshua Coffin, lent the boy the poetry of Robert Burns.

At nineteen he had a poem accepted for publication. The *Newburyport Press*, in which it appeared, was edited by William Lloyd Garrison, soon to become the editor of the *Liberator*, the foremost journal of abolitionism. Garrison, who became

Whittier's lifelong friend and associate in emancipation propaganda, encouraged the lad to think of himself as a writer. He abandoned the trade of cobbler, which he was learning, and returned to school. He spent a year at Haverhill Academy, taught school, worked for a Boston publisher, and held obscure editorial positions while his articles and poems appeared with increasing frequency in a variety of publications. His first volume, *Legends of New England* (1831) was prose; a poem published the next year, *Moll Pitcher*, had a story with some elements of interest, but after revising it for the volume of 1840 the poet wisely excluded it from further collections. This was the fate of a large proportion of his early poems.

Meanwhile his general activities had given him a position, if not actual prominence, in the journalism of reform. *Justice and Expediency* (1833) was a notable antislavery tract, coinciding with his election as delegate to the National Anti-Slavery Convention in Philadelphia. Such participation led to his election, in 1835, to the Massachusetts legislature, where he served one term, while drawing a small additional income as editor of the *Haverhill Gazette*. In 1836 he moved down the Merrimack to nearby Amesbury, where, in 1840, he chose the permanent residence which has

become a shrine to his memory. Meanwhile his best energies and writing had been devoted to the antislavery cause. In 1835, he and the British abolitionist George Thompson, mobbed on a lecture tour in Concord, New Hampshire, drove their carriage through a hail of bullets, miraculously escaping with their lives. In 1837 he went to Philadelphia to write for an abolition paper, which he edited as *The Pennsylvania Freeman* for two years before returning to Amesbury.

In this quiet town the remainder of his life was centered. He maintained intermittent editorial connections with the local *Transcript*, and was contributing editor for several more distant publications, notably the antislavery *National Era* in Washington. He continued, for the next quarter of a century, to be more generally known as a propagandist of reform than as a poet, although actually he had now found his own independent voice. A new Whittier, master of a firm and simple eloquence, appeared with increasing frequency in such volumes as *Ballads and Other Poems* (1844), *Voices of Freedom* (1846), *Songs of Labor* (1850), *The Chapel of the Hermits and Other Poems* (1853), *The Panorama and Other Poems* (1856), and *Home Ballads and Poems* (1860).

His fellow literary men recognized his maturity in this period, and he was inevitably included in the group associated with Lowell, Holmes, and others, in the founding of the *Atlantic*

*Monthly* in 1857. But although his poems were published in a collected edition in London (1850) and in Boston (1857), it was not until his masterpiece, *Snow-Bound*, appeared in 1866 that his countrymen at large recognized his value, and rewarded him with a sufficient sale to make his situation comfortable.

His personal life was now beset by problems, reflected in the increasing religious fervor and thoughtfulness of his lyrics. He had never married, devoting his slender means to his family at Amesbury, and the death of his mother and two sisters occurred between 1857 and 1864. His health, which had never been vigorous, was in steady decline after a severe illness during the winter of 1867-1868. Emancipation, together with the success of other reforms, suddenly canceled his old incentives. His seventieth birthday, in 1877, was celebrated at the famous dinner given him by the *Atlantic Monthly*, which was attended by almost every living American author of note from the generation of Bryant to that of Mark Twain and received much public attention both here and abroad. His eightieth birthday was marked by a national celebration.

It would be injudicious to rank Whittier among the great poets, yet it is certain that his genuine values will survive the neglect of recent decades.

The standard edition is *The Writings of John Greenleaf Whittier*, Riverside Edition, 7 vols., 1888-1889; reissued, enlarged, as the Standard Library Edition, 7 vols., 1894. The complete one-

volume Cambridge Edition, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1894, is still the best generally available edition.

The standard biography is Samuel T. Pickard, *Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 2 vols., 1894, revised 1907. The same author published *Whit-*

*tier-Land*, a useful study, in 1904. G. R. Carpenter's *Whittier*, American Men of Letters Series, 1903, is a good introduction. More recent studies of value are Whitman Bennett, *Whittier: Bard of Freedom*, 1941; and John A. Pollard, *John Greenleaf Whittier: Friend of Man*, 1949.

## Ichabod<sup>5</sup>

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn  
Which once he wore!  
The glory from his gray hairs gone  
Forevermore!

Revile him not, the Tempter hath  
A snare for all;  
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,  
Befit his fall! 5

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,  
When he who might  
Have lighted up and led his age,  
Falls back in night. 10

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark  
A bright soul driven,  
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,  
From hope and heaven! 15

Let not the land once proud of him  
Insult him now,  
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,  
Dishonored brow. 20

But let its humbled sons, instead,  
From sea to lake,  
A long lament, as for the dead,  
In sadness make.

5. Hebrew, "without glory"; see I Samuel iv: 21. The poet wrote the following note for the collected *Writings* (1888): "This poem was the outcome of the surprise and grief and forecast of evil consequences which I felt on reading the seventh of March speech of Daniel Webster in support of the 'compromise' and the Fugitive Slave Bill. No partisan or personal enmity dictated it. On the contrary my admiration of the splendid personality and intellectual power of the great Senator was never stronger than when I laid down his speech, and, in one of the saddest

moments of my life, penned my protest." Many then agreed with Whittier that the greatly beloved statesman had fallen from glory. However, his compromise with the moderate slavery views of Clay, in order to defeat the radical Calhoun, is sympathetically viewed by many later historians. Webster died in 1852. Thirty years later, in "The Lost Occasion," Whittier admitted that Webster erred on the side of logic. "Ichabod" first appeared in *The National Era* for May 2, 1850, was collected the same year in *Songs of Labor*, and was retained in later collections.



Of all we loved and honored, naught 25  
     Save power remains;  
 A fallen angel's pride of thought,  
     Still strong in chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes  
     The soul has fled: 30  
 When faith is lost, when honor dies,  
     The man is dead!

Then pay the reverence of old days  
     To his dead fame;  
 Walk backward, with averted gaze, 35  
     And hide the shame!

1850

### First-Day Thoughts<sup>5</sup>

In calm and cool and silence, once again  
     I find my old accustomed place among  
     My brethren,<sup>6</sup> where, perchance, no human tongue  
     Shall utter words; where never hymn is sung,  
     Nor deep-toned organ blown, nor censer swung, 5  
 Nor dim light falling through the pictured pane!  
 There, syllabled by silence, let me hear  
 The still small voice which reached the prophet's ear;  
 Read in my heart a still diviner law  
 Than Israel's leader<sup>7</sup> on his tables saw! 10  
 There let me strive with each besetting sin,  
     Recall my wandering fancies, and restrain  
     The sore disquiet of a restless brain;  
     And, as the path of duty is made plain,  
 May grace be given that I may walk therein, 15  
     Not like the hireling, for his selfish gain,  
 With backward glances and reluctant tread,  
 Making a merit of his coward dread,  
     But, cheerful, in the light around me thrown,  
     Walking as one to pleasant service led; 20

5. "First Day" is Sunday. The Quakers designated the days of the week by number, to avoid reference to the pagan gods for which the days are named. "First-Day Thoughts" was originally published in *The Chapel of the Hermits and Other Poems* (1853).

6. Friends' worship emphasized fellow-

ship, and utilized communal silence instead of music, hymns, images, and stained glass (ll. 3-6). The object of worship was the direct revelation of God to the individual—the perception of the "inward light" (ll. 7-10).

7. Moses. For the "tables" of the laws, cf. Exodus xxxi: 18. and xx, *passim*.

Doing God's will as if it were my own,  
Yet trusting not in mine, but in his strength alone!

1853

### Skipper Ireson's Ride<sup>3</sup>

Of all the rides since the birth of time,  
Told in story or sung in rhyme,—  
On Apulcius's<sup>4</sup> Golden Ass,  
Or onc-eyed Calender's<sup>5</sup> horse of brass,  
Witch astride of a human back,  
Islam's prophet<sup>6</sup> on Al-Borák,—  
The strangest ride that ever was sped  
Was Ireson's, out from Marblehead!  
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,  
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart  
By the women of Marblehead!

5

10

Body of turkey, head of owl,  
Wings a-droop like a rained-on fowl,  
Feathered and ruffled in every part,  
Skipper Ireson stood in the cart.  
Scores of women, old and young,  
Strong of muscle, and glib of tongue,  
Pushed and pulled up the rocky lane,  
Shouting and singing the shrill refrain:

15

"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,

20

3. Whittier declared that this ballad "was founded solely on a fragment of rhyme which I heard from one of my early schoolmates, a native of Marblehead." The "fragment" was the refrain sung by the women; and there was a story current about Skipper Ireson which, Whittier supposed, "dated back at least a century." The poet wrote a rough draft in 1828, nearly thirty years before he published the poem. However, his record of the events was "pure fancy," as he took pains to declare in his note for his edition of 1888. There he approves the recent *History of Marblehead*, by Samuel Roads (1879), which places the incident in 1808, names the historical Ireson "Benjamin," not "Floyd," and asserts that Ireson was not responsible for neglecting "a sinking wreck." His guilty crew, by false accusations, diverted the consequences from themselves to Ireson. Roads says that the victim, contrary to legend, was carried in a dory, not a cart, and that men, not women, were the principal

avengers. The poem appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, in December, 1857. Lowell, the first editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, "familiar with Marblehead and its dialect," suggested changes making the "burthen" more "provincial" (letter to Whittier, Nov. 4, 1857; in Pickard, *Life and Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 406-407). It was collected in *Home Ballads and Poems* (1860).

4. Second-century Roman rhetorician; in his *Golden Ass* (or *Metamorphoses*) the transformation of a man to an ass is made the vehicle for comic criticism.

5. A calender is a mendicant dervish, or friar. In the *Arabian Nights* tale ("The Story of the Third Calender," called "The Story of the Third Royal Mendicant" in later translations), he did not ride the "horse of brass" whose rider he killed, but his consequent enchanted journey cost him his eye.

6. Mohammed. In one legend, he was conveyed to the highest heaven by a supernatural winged creature named Al-Borák.

Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt  
By the women o' Morble'cad!"<sup>7</sup>

Wrinkled scolds with hands on hips,  
Girls in bloom of cheek and lips,  
Wild-eyed, free-limbed, such as chase 25  
Bacchus\* round some antique vase,  
Brief of skirt, with ankles bare,  
Loose of kerchief and loose of hair,  
With conch-shells blowing and fish-horns' twang,  
Over and over the Maenads sang: 30  
"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,  
Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt  
By the women o' Morble'cad!"

Small pity for him!—He sailed away  
From a leaking ship in Chaleur Bay,<sup>8</sup>— 35  
Sailed away from a sinking wreck,  
With his own town's-people on her deck!  
"Lay by! lay by!" they called to him.  
Back he answered, "Sink or swim!  
Brag of your catch of fish again!" 40  
And off he sailed through the fog and rain!  
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,  
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart  
By the women of Marblehead!

Fathoms deep in dark Chaleur 45  
That wreck shall lie forevermore.  
Mother and sister, wife and maid,  
Looked from the rocks of Marblehead  
Over the moaning and rainy sea,—  
Looked for the coming that might not be! 50  
What did the winds and the sea-birds say  
Of the cruel captain who sailed away—?  
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,  
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart  
By the women of Marblehead! 55

Through the street, on either side,  
Up flew windows, doors swung wide;  
Sharp-tongued spinsters, old wives gray,  
Treble lent the fish-horn's bray.

7. Following the advice of Lowell, his editor, Whittier used the Marblehead dialect for the refrain in stanzas 2, 3, 6, and 7, after establishing the standard English in stanza 1.

8. Roman god of wine, generally shown as attended by wild, frenetic girls called Bacchantes or Maenads (l. 30).  
9. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Sea-worn grandsires, cripple-bound, 60  
 Hulks of old sailors run aground,  
 Shook head, and fist, and hat, and cane,  
 And cracked with curses the hoarse refrain:  
 "Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,  
 'Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt 65  
 By the women o' Morble'cad!"

Sweetly along the Salem road  
 Bloom of orchard and lilac showed.  
 Little the wicked skipper knew  
 Of the fields so green and the sky so blue. 70  
 Riding there in his sorry trim,  
 Like an Indian idol glum and grim,  
 Scarcely he seemed the sound to hear  
 Of voices shouting, far and near:  
 "Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt, 75  
 'Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt  
 By the women o' Morble'cad!"

"Hear me, neighbors!" at last he cried,—  
 "What to me is this noisy ride?  
 What is the shame that clothes the skin 80  
 To the nameless horror that lives within?  
 Waking or sleeping, I see a wreck,  
 And hear a cry from a reeling deck!  
 Hate me and curse me,—I only dread  
 The hand of God and the face of the dead!" 85  
 Said old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,  
 Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart  
 By the women of Marblehead!

Then the wife of the skipper lost at sea  
 Said, "God has touched him! why should we!" 90  
 Said an old wife mourning her only son,  
 "Cut the rogue's tether and let him run!"  
 So with soft relentings and rude excuse,  
 Half scorn, half pity, they cut him loose,  
 And gave him a cloak to hide him in, 95  
 And left him alone with his shame and sin.  
 Poor Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,  
 Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart  
 By the women of Marblehead!

# Telling the Bees<sup>1</sup>

Here is the place; right over the hill  
 Runs the path I took;  
 You can see the gap in the old wall still,  
 And the stepping-stones in the shallow brook.

There is the house, with the gate red-barred, 5  
 And the poplars tall;  
 And the barn's brown length, and the cattle-yard,  
 And the white horns tossing above the wall.

There are the beehives ranged in the sun;  
 And down by the brink 10  
 Of the brook are her poor flowers, weed-o'errun,  
 Pansy and daffodil, rose and pink.

A year has gone, as the tortoise goes,  
 Heavy and slow;  
 And the same rose blows, and the same sun glows, 15  
 And the same brook sings of a year ago.

There's the same sweet clover-smell in the breeze;  
 And the June sun warm  
 Tangles his wings of fire in the trees,  
 Setting, as then, over Fernside farm. 20

I mind me how with a lover's care  
 From my Sunday coat  
 I brushed off the burrs, and smoothed my hair,  
 And cooled at the brookside my brow and throat.

Since we parted, a month had passed,— 25  
 To love, a year;  
 Down through the beeches I looked at last  
 On the little red gate and the well-sweep near.

I can see it all now,—the slantwise rain  
 Of light through the leaves, 30

1. First collected in *Home Ballads and Other Poems* (1860) after appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for April, 1858. On submitting it to Lowell, Whittier admitted the fear that its "simplicity" might occasion disparagement. Actually, it is his purest ballad, free of didacticism, and simply faithful to the Whittier homestead, "Fernside farm." However, it was not his sister Mary who had died there the year before, but his

mother. In the volume, the poet added the following explanatory note: "A remarkable custom, brought from the Old Country, formerly prevailed in the rural districts of New England. On the death of a member of the family, the bees were at once informed of the event, and their hives dressed in mourning. This ceremonial was supposed to be necessary to prevent the swarms from leaving their hives and seeking a new home."

The sundown's blaze on her window-pane,  
The bloom of her roses under the caves.

Just the same as a month before,—  
The house and the trees,  
The barn's brown gable, the vine by the door,— 35  
Nothing changed but the hives of bees.

Before them, under the garden wall,  
Forward and back,  
Went drearly singing the chore-girl small,  
Draping each hive with a shred of black. 40

Trembling, I listened: the summer sun  
Had the chill of snow;  
For I knew she was telling the bees of one  
Gone on the journey we all must go!

Then I said to myself, "My Mary weeps 45  
For the dead to-day:  
Haply her blind old grandsire sleeps  
The fret and the pain of his age away."

But her dog whined low; on the doorway sill,  
With his cane to his chin, 50  
The old man sat; and the chore-girl still  
Sung to the bees stealing out and in.

And the song she was singing ever since  
In my ear sounds on:—  
"Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence! 55  
Mistress Mary is dead and gone!"

1858, 1860

## Laus Deo<sup>2</sup>

It is done!

Clang of bell and roar of gun  
Send the tidings up and down.

How the belfries rock and reel!

How the great guns, peal on peal, 5  
Fling the joy from town to town!<sup>3</sup>

2. The title, familiar in the Latin Vulgate Bible, is translated as "Praise be to God." The prefatory note, as amplified in the collected *Writings* of 1888, reads as follows: "On hearing the bells ring on the passage of the constitutional amendment abolishing slavery. The resolution was adopted by Congress, January 31, 1865. The ratification by the

requisite number of states was announced December 18, 1865."

3. Whittier "sat in the Friends' meeting-house in Amesbury, and listened to the bells and cannon." As he later told Lucy Larcom, the poem "wrote itself, or rather sang itself, while the bells rang" (Pickard, *Life and Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 488-489).

Ring, O bells!  
 Every stroke exulting tells  
 Of the burial hour of crime.  
 Loud and long, that all may hear, 10  
 Ring for every listening ear  
 Of Eternity and Time!

Let us kneel:  
 God's own voice is in that peal,  
 And this spot is holy ground.<sup>4</sup> 15  
 Lord, forgive us! What are we,  
 That our eyes this glory see,  
 That our ears have heard this sound!

For the Lord  
 On the whirlwind is abroad; 20  
 In the earthquake He has spoken;  
 He has smitten with His thunder\*  
 The iron walls asunder,  
 And the gates of brass are broken!

Loud and long 25  
 Lift the old exulting song;  
 Sing with Miriam by the sea,  
 He has cast the mighty down;  
 Horse and rider sink and drown;  
 'He hath triumphed gloriously!'<sup>6</sup> 30

Did we dare,  
 In our agony of prayer,<sup>7</sup>  
 Ask for more than He has done?  
 When was ever his right hand  
 Over any time or land 35  
 Stretched as now beneath the sun?<sup>8</sup>

How they pale,  
 Ancient myth and song and tale,  
 In this wonder of our days,  
 When the cruel rod of war 40  
 Blossoms white with righteous law,<sup>9</sup>  
 And the wrath of man is praise!

Blotted out!  
 All within and all about

4. *Cf.* Exodus iii: 3-6.

5. *Cf.* Job xxxvii: 2-12.

6. *Cf.* Exodus xv: 21-22.

7. *Cf.* Luke xxii: 39-44.

8. Isaiah repeatedly used this figure, for both God's wrath and God's mercy.

Compare Isaiah v: 25 with xiv: 27, and see ix: 12-13 and x: 4.

9. A double reference to Aaron's rod: of war (*cf.* Exodus vii: 8-17), and of law (*cf.* Numbers xvii: 8-10).

Shall a fresher life begin;  
 Freer breathe the universe  
 As it rolls its heavy curse  
 On the dead and buried sin!

It is done!  
 In the circuit of the sun  
 Shall the sound thereof go forth.  
 It shall bid the sad rejoice,  
 It shall give the dumb a voice,  
 It shall belt with joy the earth!<sup>1</sup>

Ring and swing,  
 Bells of joy! On morning's wing  
 Sound the song of praise abroad!  
 With a sound of broken chains  
 Tell the nations that He reigns,  
 Who alone is Lord and God!<sup>2</sup>

60  
 1865

## From Snow-Bound

A WINTER IDYL<sup>3</sup>

TO THE MEMORY OF THE HOUSEHOLD<sup>4</sup> IT DESCRIBES

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

"As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark, so good Spirits which be Angels of Light, are augmented not only by the Divine Light of the Sun, but also by our common VVood Fire: and as the Celestial Fire drives away dark spirits so also this our Fire of VVood doth the same."—COR. AGRIPPA, OCCULT PHILOSOPHY, Book I. ch. v.<sup>5</sup>

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
 Arrives the snow; and, driving o'er the fields,  
 Seems nowhere to alight; the whited air  
 Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven.  
 And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
 The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
 Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
 Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed  
 In a tumultuous privacy of storm."

—EMERSON, THE SNOW-STORM.

1. Cf. Isaiah xxxv: 4-8.

2. Cf. Psalms xlv, echoed in this stanza.

3. *Snow-Bound* was published as a small volume in 1866. The first issue was several times reprinted, and gave the author his first considerable income from any publication. New editions were repeatedly demanded, numbering at least twenty-one before 1930, although the poem had been incorporated in the collected *Writings* in 1888. The poet's lengthy introduction is here substantially represented in the notes to the text of the poem.

4. "The inmates of the family at the Whittier homestead, who are referred to in the poem, were my father, mother, my brother and two sisters, and my uncle and aunt both unmarried. In addition, there was the district schoolmaster who boarded with us" [Whittier's introduction].

5. Whittier explained in his introduction that he still possessed this strange "wizard's conjuring-book," dated 1651 (cf. l. 270). It had belonged to a local "sorcerer" known to his mother. Its author, as he quotes from the title page, was "Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Knight,



The sun that brief December day  
 Rose cheerless over hills of gray,  
 And, darkly circled, gave at noon  
 A sadder light than waning moon.  
 Slow tracing down the thickening sky 5  
 Its mute and ominous prophecy,  
 A portent seeming less than threat,  
 It sank from sight before it set.  
 A chill no coat, however stout,  
 Of homespun stuff could quite shut out, 10  
 A hard, dull bitterness of cold,  
 That checked, mid-vein, the circling race  
 Of life-blood in the sharpened face,  
 The coming of the snow-storm told.  
 The wind blew east; we heard the roar 15  
 Of Ocean on his wintry shore,  
 And felt the strong pulse throbbing there  
 Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—  
 Brought in the wood from out of doors, 20  
 Littered the stalls, and from the mows  
 Raked down the herd's-grass<sup>6</sup> for the cows:  
 Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;  
 And, sharply clashing horn on horn,  
 Impatient down the stanchion rows 25  
 The cattle shake their walnut bows;<sup>7</sup>  
 While, peering from his early perch  
 Upon the scaffold's pole of birch  
 The cock his crested helmet bent  
 And down his querulous challenge sent. 30

Unwarmed by any sunset light  
 The gray day darkened into night,  
 A night made hoary with the swarm  
 And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,  
 As zigzag, wavering to and fro 35  
 Crossed and recrossed the wingèd snow:  
 And ere the early bedtime came  
 The white drift piled the window-frame,  
 And through the glass the clothes-line posts  
 Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts. 40

Doctor of Both Laws (*etc.*). Presumably this was a work of Cornelius Heinrich Agrippa (1486–1535), German physician and writer on the occult.

6. Either timothy or redtop, both

esteemed as fodder.

7. "Stanchions" are upright posts, used in a barn for tethering cattle; "bows," wooden yokes, facilitated tethering and hauling; cf. "oxbow."

So all night long the storm roared on:  
 The morning broke without a sun;  
 In tiny spherule traced with lines  
 Of Nature's geometric signs,  
 In starry flake, and pellicle, 45  
 All day the hoary meteor fell;  
 And, when the second morning shone,  
 We looked upon a world unknown,  
 On nothing we could call our own.  
 Around the glistening wonder bent 50  
 The blue walls of the firmament,  
 No cloud above, no earth below,—  
 A universe of sky and snow!  
 The old familiar sights of ours  
 Took marvellous shapes; strange domes and towers 55  
 Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,  
 Or garden-wall, or belt of wood;  
 A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,  
 A fenceless drift that once was road;  
 The bridle-post an old man sat 60  
 With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;  
 The well-curb had a Chinese roof;  
 And even the long sweep, high aloof,  
 In its slant splendor, seemed to tell  
 Of Pisa's leaning miracle. 65

A prompt, decisive man, no breath  
 Our father wasted: "Boys, a path!"  
 Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy  
 Count such a summons less than joy?)  
 Our buskins<sup>a</sup> on our feet we drew; 70  
 With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,  
 To guard our necks and ears from snow,  
 We cut the solid whiteness through.  
 And, where the drift was deepest, made  
 A tunnel walled and overlaid 75  
 With dazzling crystal: we had read  
 Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,  
 And to our own his name we gave,  
 With many a wish the luck were ours  
 To test his lamp's supernal powers. 80  
 We reached the barn with merry din,  
 And roused the prisoned brutes within.  
 The old horse thrust his long head out,

**a.** Leather boots.

And grave with wonder gazed about;  
 The cock his lusty greeting said, 85  
 And forth his speckled harem led;  
 The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,  
 And mild reproach of hunger looked;  
 The hornèd patriarch of the sheep,  
 Like Egypt's Amun<sup>9</sup> roused from sleep, 90  
 Shook his sage head with gesture mute,  
 And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore  
 The loosening drift its breath before;  
 Low circling round its southern zone, 95  
 The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.  
 No church-bell lent its Christian tone  
 To the savage air, no social smoke  
 Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.  
 A solitude made more intense 100  
 By dreary-voicèd elements,  
 The shrieking of the mindless wind,  
 The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,  
 And on the glass the unmeaning beat  
 Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet. 105  
 Beyond the circle of our hearth  
 No welcome sound of toil or mirth  
 Unbound the spell, and testified  
 Of human life and thought outside.  
 We minded<sup>1</sup> that the sharpest ear 110  
 The buried brooklet could not hear,  
 The music of whose liquid lip  
 Had been to us companionship,  
 And, in our lonely life, had grown  
 To have an almost human tone. 115

As night drew on, and, from the crest  
 Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,  
 The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank  
 From sight beneath the smothering bank,  
 We piled, with care, our nightly stack 120  
 Of wood against the chimney-back,—  
 The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,  
 And on its top the stout back-stick;  
 The knotty forestick laid apart,  
 And filled between with curious art 125

9. Ammon; an Egyptian divinity who assumed the form of a ram (l. 89), his sacred animal.  
 1. Knew.

The ragged brush; then, hovering near,  
 We watched the first red blaze appear,  
 Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam  
 On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,  
 Until the old, rude-furnished room 130  
 Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;  
 While radiant with a mimic flame  
 Outside the sparkling drift became,  
 And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree  
 Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free. 135  
 The crane and pendent trammels<sup>2</sup> showed,  
 The 'Turks' heads on the andirons glowed;  
 While childish fancy, prompt to tell  
 The meaning of the miracle,  
 Whispered the old rhyme: "*Under the tree,*  
*When fire outdoors burns merrily,*  
*There the witches are making tea."* 140

The moon above the eastern wood  
 Shone at its full; the hill-range stood  
 Transfigured in the silver flood, 145  
 Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,  
 Dead white, save where some sharp ravine  
 Took shadow, or the sombre green  
 Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black  
 Against the whiteness at their back. 150  
 For such a world and such a night  
 Most fitting that unwarming light,  
 Which only seemed where'er it fell  
 To make the coldness visible.

Shut in from all the world without, 155  
 We sat the clean-winged hearth about,  
 Content to let the north-wind roar  
 In baffled rage at pane and door,  
 While the red logs before us beat  
 The frost-line back with tropic heat; 160  
 And ever, when a louder blast  
 Shook beam and rafter as it passed,  
 The merrier up its roaring draught  
 The great throat of the chimney laughed;  
 The house-dog on his paws outspread 165  
 Laid to the fire his drowsy head,

2. In a fireplace, the cooking pot was suspended by trammels (pothooks) from the crane, a long metal arm.

The cat's dark silhouette on the wall  
 A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;  
 And, for the winter fireside meet,  
 Between the andirons' straddling feet, 170  
 'The mug of cider simmered slow,  
 The apples sputtered in a row,  
 And, close at hand, the basket stood  
 With nuts from brown October's wood.

What matter how the night behaved? 175  
 What matter how the north-wind raved?  
 Blow high, blow low, not all its snow  
 Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.  
 O 'Time and Change!—with hair as gray  
 As was my sire's that winter day, 180

How strange it seems, with so much gone  
 Of life and love, to still live on!  
 Ah, brother!<sup>3</sup> only I and thou  
 Are left of all that circle now,—  
 'The dear home faces whereupon 185  
 'That fitful firelight paled and shone.

Henceforth, listen as we will,  
 'The voices of that hearth are still;  
 Look where we may, the wide earth o'er  
 'Those lighted faces smile no more. 190

We tread the paths their feet have worn,  
 We sit beneath their orchard trees,  
 We hear, like them, the hum of bees  
 And rustle of the bladed corn;

We turn the pages that they read, 195  
 Their written words we linger o'er,  
 But in the sun they cast no shade,  
 No voice is heard, no sign is made,

No step is on the conscious floor!  
 Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust, 200  
 (Since He who knows our need is just,)
 That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.

Alas for him who never sees  
 The stars shine through his cypress-trees!  
 Who, hopeless, lays his dead away, 205  
 Nor looks to see the breaking day  
 Across the mournful marbles play!

Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
 The truth to flesh and sense unknown,

That Life is ever lord of Death, 210  
 And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time with stories old,<sup>4</sup>  
 Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,  
 Or stammered from our school-book lore  
 "The Chief of Gambia's golden shore."<sup>5</sup> 215

How often since, when all the land  
 Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,  
 As if a far-blown trumpet stirred  
 The languorous sin-sick air, I heard:  
 "Does not the voice of reason cry, 220

*Claim the first right which Nature gave,  
 From the red scourge of bondage fly,  
 Nor deign to live a burdened slave!"*

Our father<sup>6</sup> rode again his ride  
 On Memphremagog's<sup>7</sup> wooded side; 225  
 Sat down again to moose and samp<sup>8</sup>  
 In trapper's hut and Indian camp;  
 Lived o'er the old idyllic ease  
 Bencath St. François'<sup>9</sup> hemlock-trees;  
 Again for him the moonlight shone 230  
 On Norman cap and bodiced zone;  
 Again he heard the violin play  
 Which led the village dance away.

And mingled in its merry whirl  
 The grandam and the laughing girl. 235  
 Or, nearer home, our steps he led  
 Where Salisbury's<sup>1</sup> level marshes spread  
 Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;  
 Where merry mowers, hale and strong,  
 Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along 240

4. "In my boyhood, in our lonely farmhouse, we had scanty sources of information; few books and only a small weekly newspaper. Our only annual was the Almanac. Under such circumstances story-telling was a necessary resource in the long winter evenings" [Whittier's introduction].

5. Whittier's note identifies the "school-book" as Caleb Bingham's *The American Primer*, and the poem as "The African Chief," of which this line was the first in the third stanza. The lines in italics (ll. 220-224) reproduce the fourth stanza of the poem, which was written, in fifteen stanzas, by Sarah Wentworth Morton (1759-1846).

6. John Whittier (1760-1830). In the introduction, Whittier wrote: "My

father when a young man had traversed the wilderness to Canada, and could tell us of his adventures with Indians and wild beasts, and of his sojourn in the French villages."

7. A lake on the border between Vermont and Canada, originally a French possession.

8. An Indian corn-meal mush or coarse hominy.

9. North of Lake Memphremagog (l. 225) in Quebec Province are a hamlet, a stream, and a lake named St. Francis.

1. A town east of the Haverhill farmstead, near the mouth of the Merrimack. Just north, on the New Hampshire coast (see ll. 242-243), are the promontory of Little Boar's Head, and offshore, the Isles of Shoals.

The low green prairies of the sea.  
 We shared the fishing off Boar's Head  
 And round the rocky Isles of Shoals  
 The hake-broil on the drift-wood coals;  
 The chowder on the sand-beach made, 245  
 Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot  
 With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.  
 We heard the tales of witchcraft old,  
 And dream and sign and marvel told  
 To sleepy listeners as they lay 250  
 Stretched idly on the salted hay,  
 Adrift along the winding shores,  
 When favoring breezes deigned to blow  
 The square sail of the gundelow  
 And idle lay the useless oars. 255

Our mother,<sup>2</sup> while she turned her wheel  
 Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,  
 Told how the Indian hordes came down  
 At midnight on Cocheco<sup>3</sup> town,  
 And how her own great-uncle bore 260  
 His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.  
 Recalling, in her fitting phrase,  
 So rich and picturesque and free,  
 ('The common unrhymed poetry  
 Of simple life and country ways,') 265  
 The story of her early days,—  
 She made us welcome to her home;  
 Old hearths grew wide to give us room;  
 We stole with her a frightened look  
 At the gray wizard's conjuring-book, 270  
 The fame whereof went far and wide  
 Through all the simple country-side;  
 We heard the hawks at twilight play,  
 The boat-horn on Piscataqua,<sup>4</sup>  
 The loon's weird laughter far away; 275  
 We fished her little trout-brook, knew  
 What flowers in wood and meadow grew,  
 What sunny hillsides autumn-brown  
 She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,

2. Abigail Hussey Whittier (1781-1857). "My mother, who was born in the Indian-haunted region of Somersworth, New Hampshire, between Dover and Portsmouth, told us of the inroads of the savages, and the narrow escape of her ancestors. She described strange people who lived on the Piscataqua and

Cocheco, among whom was Bantam the sorcerer" [Whittier's introduction].

3. Site of an Indian raid, on the Cocheco River, above Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

4. A river on the Maine-New Hampshire border.

Saw where in sheltered cove and bay 280  
 The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,  
 And heard the wild-geese calling loud  
 Beneath the gray November cloud.

Then, haply, with a look more grave,  
 And soberer tone, some tale she gave 285  
 From painful Sewel's ancient tome,<sup>5</sup>  
 Beloved in every Quaker home,  
 Of faith fire-winged by martyrdom,  
 Or Chalkley's Journal,<sup>6</sup> old and quaint,—  
 Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint!— 290  
 Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,  
 And water-butt and bread-cask failed,  
 And cruel, hungry eyes pursued  
 His portly presence mad for food,  
 With dark hints muttered under breath 295  
 Of casting lots for life or death,  
 Offered, if Heaven withheld supplies,  
 To be himself the sacrifice.  
 Then, suddenly, as if to save  
 The good man from his living grave, 300  
 A ripple on the water grew,  
 A school of porpoise flashed in view.  
 "Take, eat,"<sup>7</sup> he said, "and be content;  
 These fishes in my stead are sent  
 By Him who gave the tangled ram 305  
 To spare the child of Abraham."<sup>8</sup>

Our uncle,<sup>9</sup> innocent of books,  
 Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,  
 The ancient teachers never dumb  
 Of Nature's unhoused lyceum. 310  
 In moons and tides and weather wise,  
 He read the clouds as prophecies,  
 And foul or fair could well divine,  
 By many an occult hint and sign,  
 Holding the cunning-warded keys 315

5. William Sewel (sometimes Sewell), a Dutch Quaker; his *History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the People called Quakers* (in Dutch, 1717; in English, 1725) became a source book among Friends.

6. Thomas Chalkley (1675–1741), Quaker shipmaster and missionary, settled in Philadelphia in 1701 and there published his *Journal* (1747) from which Whittier quotes, in a note to this

poem, the more tempered account of this incident (ll. 291–306).

7. Cf. the bread and wine of the Eucharist (Matthew xxvi: 26–27).

8. Cf. Genesis xxii: 7–14.

9. Moses Whittier (died 1824). "My uncle was ready with his record of hunting and fishing and, it must be confessed, with stories which he at least half believed, of witch-craft and apparitions" [Whittier's introduction].



To all the woodcraft mysteries;  
 Himself to Nature's heart so near  
 That all her voices in his ear  
 Of beast or bird had meanings clear,  
 Like Apollonius<sup>1</sup> of old, 320  
 Who knew the tales the sparrows told,  
 Or Hermes,<sup>2</sup> who interpreted  
 What the sage cranes of Nilus said;  
 A simple, guileless, childlike man,  
 Content to live where life began; 325  
 Strong only on his native grounds,  
 The little world of sights and sounds  
 Whose girdle was the parish bounds,  
 Whereof his fondly partial pride  
 The common features magnified, 330  
 As Surrey hills to mountains grew  
 In White of Selborne's<sup>3</sup> loving view,—  
 He told how teal and loon he shot,  
 And how the eagle's eggs he got,  
 The feats on pond and river done, 335  
 The prodigies of rod and gun;  
 'Till, warming with the tales he told,  
 Forgotten was the outside cold,  
 The bitter wind unheeded blew,  
 From ripening corn the pigeons flew, 340  
 The partridge drummed i' the wood, the mink  
 Went fishing down the river-bank;  
 In fields with bean or clover gay,  
 The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,  
     Peered from the doorway of his cell; 345  
 The muskrat plied the mason's trade,  
 And tier by tier his mud-walls laid;  
 And from the shagbark overhead  
     The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.  
  
 Next, the dear aunt,<sup>4</sup> whose smile of cheer 350  
 And voice in dreams I see and hear,—  
 The sweetest woman ever Fate  
 Perverse denied a household mate,  
 Who, lonely, homeless, not the less

1. Apollonius of Tyre. Greek philosopher of the first century, said to be a mystical worker of miracles.

2. A mythical personage, alleged author of the age-old *Hermetic Books* of Egyptian magic, influential in medieval alchemy and modern occult lore.

3. Gilbert White (1720–1793), English naturalist and clergyman of Selborne, published *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789), a classic in its field.

4. His mother's sister, Mercy Evans Hussey, who died in 1846.

Found peace in love's unselfishness, 355  
 And welcome wheresoe'er she went,  
 A calm and gracious element,  
 Whose presence seemed the sweet income  
 And womanly atmosphere of home,—  
 Called up her girlhood memories, 360  
 The huskings and the apple-bees,  
 The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,  
 Weaving through all the poor details  
 And homespun warp of circumstance  
 A golden woof-thread of romance. 365  
 For well she kept her genial mood  
 And simple faith of maidenhood;  
 Before her still a cloud-land lay,  
 The mirage loomed across her way;  
 The morning dew, that dries so soon 370  
 With others, glistened at her noon;  
 Through years of toil and soil and care,  
 From glossy tress to thin gray hair,  
 All unprofaned she held apart  
 The virgin fancies of the heart. 375  
 Be shame to him of woman born  
 Who hath for such but thought of scorn.

There, too, our elder sister<sup>5</sup> plied  
 Her evening task the stand beside;  
 A full, rich nature, free to trust, 380  
 Truthful and almost sternly just,  
 Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,  
 And make her generous thought a fact,  
 Keeping with many a light disguise  
 The secret of self-sacrifice. 385  
 O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best,  
 That Heaven itself could give thee,—rest,  
 Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!  
 How many a poor one's blessing went  
 With thee beneath the low green tent 390  
 Whose curtain never outward swings!

As one who held herself a part  
 Of all she saw, and let her heart  
 Against the household bosom lean,  
 Upon the motley-braided mat 395  
 Our youngest and our dearest<sup>6</sup> sat,

5. Mary Caldwell Whittier (1806–1861).

6. Whittier's younger sister, Elizabeth Hussey Whittier, had died "one little

year ago" (1864), aged forty-eight. For some idea of their close companionship, see Pickard, *Life and Letters*, Vol. I, pp. 29–31.

Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,  
 Now bathed in the unfading green  
 And holy peace of Paradise.  
 Oh, looking from some heavenly hill, 400  
 Or from the shade of saintly palms,  
 Or silver reach of river calms,  
 Do those large eyes behold me still?  
 With me one little year ago:—  
 The chill weight of the winter snow 405  
 For months upon her grave has lain;  
 And now, when summer south-winds blow  
 And brier and harebell bloom again,  
 I tread the pleasant paths we trod,  
 I see the violet-sprinkled sod 410  
 Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak  
 The hillside flowers she loved to seek,  
 Yet following me where'er I went  
 With dark eyes full of love's content.  
 The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills 415  
 The air with sweetness; all the hills  
 Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;  
 But still I wait with ear and eye  
 For something gone which should be nigh,  
 A loss in all familiar things, 420  
 In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.  
 And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,  
 Am I not richer than of old?  
 Safe in thy immortality,  
 What change can reach the wealth I hold? 425  
 What chance can mar the pearl and gold  
 Thy love hath left in trust with me?  
 And while in life's late afternoon,  
 Where cool and long the shadows grow,  
 I walk to meet the night that soon 430  
 Shall shape and shadow overflow,  
 I cannot feel that thou art far,  
 Since near at need the angels are;  
 And when the sunset gates unbar,  
 Shall I not see thee waiting stand, 435  
 And, white against the evening star,  
 The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,  
 The master of the district school<sup>7</sup>  
 Held at the fire his favored place, 440

7. The schoolmaster here immortalized was George Haskell (1799-1876).

Its warm glow lit a laughing face  
 Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared  
 The uncertain prophecy of beard.  
 He teased the mitten-blinded cat,  
 Played cross-pins<sup>8</sup> on my uncle's hat, 445  
 Sang songs, and told us what befalls  
 In classic Dartmouth's college halls.  
 Born the wild Northern hills among,  
 From whence his yeoman father wrung  
 By patient toil subsistence scant, 450  
 Not competence and yet not want,  
 He early gained the power to pay  
 His cheerful, self-reliant way;  
 Could doff at ease his scholar's gown  
 To peddle wares from town to town; 455  
 Or through the long vacation's reach  
 In lonely lowland districts teach,  
 Where all the droll experience found  
 At stranger hearths in boarding round,  
 The moonlit skater's keen delight, 460  
 The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,  
 The rustic-party, with its rough  
 Accompaniment of blind-man's-buff,  
 And whirling-plate, and forfeits paid,  
 His winter task a pastime made. 465  
 Happy the snow-locked homes wherein  
 He tuned his merry violin,  
 Or played the athlete in the barn,  
 Or held the good dame's winding-yarn,  
 Or mirth-provoking versions told 470  
 Of classic legends rare and old,  
 Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome  
 Had all the commonplace of home,  
 And little seemed at best the odds  
 'Twixt Yankee peddlers and old gods; 475  
 Where Pindus-born Arachthus<sup>9</sup> took  
 The guise of any grist-mill brook,  
 And dread Olympus at his will  
 Became a huckleberry hill.  
  
 A careless boy that night he seemed; 480  
 But at his desk he had the look  
 And air of one who wisely schemed,

8. A game with pins, somewhat like modern jackstraws.

9. The river Arachthus, storied in Greek

legend, rose in the Pindus range separating Epirus and Thessaly.

And hostage from the future took  
 In trained thought and lore of book.  
 Large-brained, clear-eyed, of such as he 485  
 Shall Freedom's young apostles be,  
 Who, following in War's bloody trail,  
 Shall every lingering wrong assail;  
 All chains from limb and spirit strike,  
 Uplift the black and white alike; 490  
 Scatter before their swift advance  
 The darkness and the ignorance,  
 The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,  
 Which nurtured Treason's monstrous growth,  
 Made murder pastime, and the hell 495  
 Of prison-torture possible;  
 The cruel lie of caste refute,  
 Old forms remould, and substitute  
 For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,  
 For blind routine, wise-handed skill: 500  
 A school-house plant on every hill,  
 Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence  
 The quick wires of intelligence;<sup>1</sup>  
 Till North and South together brought  
 Shall own the same electric thought, 505  
 In peace a common flag salute,  
 And, side by side in labor's free  
 And unresentful rivalry,  
 Harvest the fields wherein they fought.

\* \* \*

At last the great logs, crumbling low, 510  
 Sent out a dull and duller glow,  
 The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,  
 Ticking its weary circuit through,  
 Pointed with mutely warning sign  
 Its black hand to the hour of nine. 515  
 That sign the pleasant circle broke:  
 My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,  
 Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,  
 And laid it tenderly away;  
 Then roused himself to safely cover 520  
 The dull red brands with ashes over.  
 And while, with care, our mother laid  
 The work aside, her steps she stayed  
 One moment, seeking to express

1. Electric telegraphy, first successfully demonstrated by Morse in 1844, was now entering a new era with the Atlantic cable of 1866.

Her grateful sense of happiness 525  
 For food and shelter, warmth and health,  
 And love's contentment more than wealth,  
 With simple wishes (not the weak,  
 Vain prayers which no fulfilment seek,  
 But such as warm the generous heart, 530  
 O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)  
 That none might lack, that bitter night,  
 For bread and clothing, warmth and light.

Within our beds awhile we heard  
 The wind that round the gables roared, 535  
 With now and then a ruder shock,  
 Which made our very bedsteads rock.  
 We heard the loosened clapboards tost,  
 The board-nails snapping in the frost;  
 And on us, through the unplastered wall, 540  
 I felt the light sifted snow-flakes fall.  
 But sleep stole on, as sleep will do  
 When hearts are light and life is new;  
 Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,  
 Till in the summer-land of dreams 545  
 They softened to the sound of streams,  
 Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,  
 And lapsing waves on quiet shores.

Next morn we wakened with the shout  
 Of merry voices high and clear; 550  
 And saw the teamsters drawing near  
 To break the drifted highways out.  
 Down the long hillside treading slow  
 We saw the half-buried oxen go,  
 Shaking the snow from heads uptost, 555  
 Their straining nostrils white with frost.  
 Before our door the straggling train  
 Drew up, an added team to gain.  
 The elders threshed their hands a-cold,  
     Passed, with the cider-mug, their jokes 560  
     From lip to lip; the younger folks  
 Down the loose snow-banks, wrestling, rolled,  
 Then toiled again the cavalcade  
     O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine,  
     And woodland paths that wound between 565  
 Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighted.  
 From every barn a team afoot,

At every house a new recruit,  
Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,  
Haply the watchful young men saw 576  
Sweet doorway pictures of the curls  
And curious eyes of merry girls,  
Lifting their hands in mock defence  
Against the snow-ball's compliments,  
And reading in each missive tost 575  
The charm with Eden never lost.

We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound;  
And, following where the teamsters led,  
The wise old Doctor<sup>7</sup> went his round,  
Just pausing at our door to say, 580  
In the brief autocratic way  
Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,  
Was free to urge her claim on all,  
That some poor neighbor sick abed  
At night our mother's aid would need. 585  
For, one in generous thought and deed,  
What mattered in the sufferer's sight  
The Quaker matron's inward light,  
The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?  
All hearts confess the saints elect 590  
Who, twain in faith, in love agree,  
And melt not in an acid sect  
The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on: a week had passed  
Since the great world was heard from last. 595  
The Almanac we studied o'er,  
Read and reread our little store  
Of books and pamphlets, scarce a score;  
One harmless novel, mostly hid  
From younger eyes, a book forbid, 600  
And poetry, (or good or bad,  
A single book was all we had,)  
Where Ellwood's<sup>8</sup> meek, drab-skirted Muse,  
A stranger to the heathen Nine,  
Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine, 605  
The wars of David and the Jews.  
At last the floundering carrier bore

7. Dr. Elias Weld, the family physician, lived at "the Rocks Village, about two miles from us," and lent the young Whittier his books.

8. Thomas Ellwood (1639-1714).

Whittier here describes the *Davideis* (1712) of this young Quaker friend of John Milton, whose later life is valuably reflected in Ellwood's autobiography.

The village paper to our door.  
 Lo! broadening outward as we read,  
 To warmer zones the horizon spread; 610  
 In panoramic length unrolled  
 We saw the marvels that it told.  
 Before us passed the painted Creeks,<sup>9</sup>  
     And daft McGregor<sup>1</sup> on his raids  
     In Costa Rica's everglades. 615  
 And up Taygetos winding slow  
 Rode Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks,<sup>2</sup>  
 A Turk's head at each saddle-bow!  
 Welcome to us its week-old news,  
 Its corner for the rustic Muse, 620  
     Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,  
 Its record, mingling in a breath  
 The wedding bell and dirge of death:  
 Jest, anecdote, and love-lorn tale,  
 The latest culprit sent to jail; 625  
 Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,  
 Its vendue<sup>3</sup> sales and goods at cost,  
     And traffic calling loud for gain.  
 We felt the stir of hall and street,  
 The pulse of life that round us beat; 630  
 The chill embargo of the snow  
 Was melted in the genial glow;  
 Wide swung again our ice-locked door,  
 And all the world was ours once more!  
  
 Clasp, Angel of the backward look 635  
     And folded wings of ashen gray  
     And voice of echoes far away,  
 The brazen covers of thy book;  
 The weird palimpsest old and vast,  
 Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past; 640  
 Where, closely mingling, pale and glow  
 The characters of joy and woe;  
 The monographs of outlived years,  
 Or smile-illumed or dim with tears,  
     Green hills of life that slope to death, 645  
 And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees  
 Shade off to mournful cypresses

9. The raids of Creek Indians in Alabama, quelled by Andrew Jackson (1814).

1. The adventurer Gregor McGregor attempted to establish a filibuster colony in Costa Rica (1819).

2. General Prince Alexander Ypsilanti (1792-1828) in 1820 led the Greek army of independence against the Turks, winning a notable engagement at Mount Taygetos in the Peloponnesos.

3. French loan word for "auction."



With the white amaranths<sup>4</sup> underneath.  
 Even while I look, I can but heed  
 The restless sands' incessant fall, 650  
 Importunate hours that hours succeed,  
 Each clamorous with its own sharp need,  
 And duty keeping pace with all.  
 Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;  
 I hear again the voice that bids 655  
 The dreamer leave his dream midway  
 For larger hopes and graver fears:  
 Life greatens in these later years,  
 The century's aloe<sup>5</sup> flowers today!

Yet, haply, in some lull of life, 660  
 Some Truce of God which breaks its strife,  
 The worlding's eyes shall gather dew,  
 Dreaming in throngful city ways  
 Of winter joys his boyhood knew;  
 And dear and early friends—the few 665  
 Who yet remain—shall pause to view  
 These Flemish pictures<sup>6</sup> of old days;  
 Sit with me by the homestead hearth,  
 And stretch the hands of memory forth  
 To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze! 670  
 And thanks untraced to lips unknown  
 Shall greet me like the odors blown  
 From unseen meadows newly mown,  
 Or lilies floating in some pond,  
 Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze beyond; 675  
 The traveller owns the grateful sense  
 Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,  
 And, pausing, takes with forehead bare  
 The benediction of the air.

1866

4. In poetic literature, an imaginary unfading flower.

5. A species of plants, or their extracts, renowned for bitterness; used in embalming the body of Jesus (*cf.* John

xix: 39–40).

6. Flemish and Dutch masters, especially in the seventeenth century, developed a powerful *genre* painting of homely and domestic subjects.

## OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

(1809–1894)

Holmes's reading made a full man; his sense of responsibility made a man ever ready for the

play of ideas which he regarded as inseparable from living; his scientific training made him an

exact and formidable opponent; his wit was at once an instrument and a recreation; his sense of humor and love of fun gave a kindly and human dimension to his criticism of life.

These characteristics of his personality and his writing were a natural reflection of the New England "renaissance," of the highly cultured society into which he was born, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1809. He was graduated from Harvard with the class of 1829, which he later celebrated annually for many years, in the best poems ever lavished upon such a subject. In 1830, while studying law at Harvard, he initiated the effective movement to prevent the scrapping of the gallant ship *Constitution*, by composing his famous poem "Old Ironsides," written impromptu with the competence of the born writer. In the next two years, magazine readers saw the first two of his *Autocrat* papers, thereafter not to be resumed for a quarter of a century although he frequently contributed to the periodicals during his busy years of professional activity.

That profession was medicine, which he began to study in 1830 in Boston. In 1833 he went to Paris, where the new emphasis on experimental techniques was revolutionizing medical science. Here Holmes laid the foundations for his later pioneering in microscopy, but his devotion to science was not so great as to prevent him from spending holidays on long rambles about Europe. He returned to Harvard in 1836 to take his degree in medicine, and that year he also

published *Poems*, his first volume.

Although he acknowledged that he had "a right to be grateful to his ancestors," what he inherited was a tradition, not a fortune. He soon found that he was not happy in the practice of medicine, and turned to the teaching of medical science. After serving as professor of anatomy at Dartmouth (1838-1840), he returned to general practice in Boston upon his marriage in 1840; but in 1847 he found his true vocation in the appointment as Parkman Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in Harvard Medical School. Among his scientific publications, the most notable had been an analysis of the shortcomings of homeopathy, and, in 1843, a study of "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever," a contribution to the reduction of the fearful mortality rate then connected with childbirth. However, his professional reputation was won not by research, of which he did his share, but by his high accomplishments as a clinician and a medical educator. He was dean of Harvard Medical School from 1847 to 1853, and until his retirement, as emeritus professor, in 1882, he continued to contribute to the broad development of medical education.

Literature, however, remained his avocation. His periodical contributions were included, along with new poems, in the *Poems* of 1846 and 1849, the former published in London, where he began to be recognized for his light verse. In 1852 he first collected his *Poetical Works*. In 1854 he published the *Songs of*

the *Class of 1829*, to be reissued with additions for many years.

In 1857, he, and other members of the Saturday Club, founded the *Atlantic Monthly*, which he named. His famous *Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* appeared in it serially, beginning with the first number, and established the familiar tone which that justly celebrated magazine preserved for many years. The *Autocrat* was published as a volume in 1858. Thereafter this wise and whimsical table talk, which ranks with the best "conversations" of literature, continued to appear in the *Atlantic*, and was collected in *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table* (1860), *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* (1872), and *Over the Teacups* (1891).

By contrast, the novels of Holmes are unimpressive, especially as narratives. Yet many readers have found compensation in the witty commentary, the sociological criticism, and the psychological explication of *Elsie Venner* (1861), *The Guardian Angel* (1867), and *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885). For all their shortcomings in fictional technique, these were pioneering experiments in the analysis of elements then becoming familiar to the clinicians of mental science, such as prenatal influence, hereditary traits, and mental trauma or fixations, in their relations to the problems of moral responsibility. Here Holmes arrayed the resources of his science against the Calvinistic orthodoxy that he attacked on various levels—including the ridiculous, in "The Deacon's Masterpiece."

Meanwhile many of his poems

were published, chiefly in the *Atlantic*, and later in the volumes of 1862, 1875, 1880, 1883 (a collected *Poetical Works*), and 1888. In spite of the real merit of some of his reflective lyrics, his recognition as a poet, here and abroad, was based on the unquestioned success of his comic verse, his gracious occasional poems, his urbane and witty light verse and *vers de société*. By its nature, humorous and light verse must seem casual and easy, and in view of its relative impermanence as compared with serious poetry, the survival of Holmes's work with the best of this *genre* is evidence of his genius.

No short sketch can do justice to the many-sided activities of this small dynamo. He was scientist and teacher, poet, essayist, and novelist. He could have had a career as a serious lecturer; he became a favorite after-dinner speaker. He wrote three biographical volumes—*Motley* (1879); *Emerson*, for the American Men of Letters series (1885); and *Henry Jacob Biglow* (1891). He gave numerous professional lectures, assisted in founding the American Medical Association, and wrote his quota of medical articles and books. Retired from his professorship at seventy-three, he at once undertook the three-year task of revising and annotating his works. He turned the observations of a foreign journey into *Our Hundred Days in Europe* (1887). If he was conservative with respect to the humanitarian cultural tradition, he was also a radical and courageous opponent of all meaningless survivals or

current shams. He broke with both the Calvinistic and Unitarian traditions of New England. Within his Brahmin "caste," as he called it, he attacked the snobbish respect for wealth, privilege, and idleness. In his novels he employed a new frankness which only his adroit expression made acceptable to his time. While laughing at feminism, he supported the admission of women to medical schools. He advocated such unpopular advances in medical practice as anesthesia and antiseptics. He energetically and cheerfully outlived the entire illustrious generation of his contemporary authors, and died in 1894, just past eighty-five.

The standard text is the Riverside Edition, *The Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 13 vols., 1891-1892, reproduced in the Standard Library Edition, 1892, to which were added in 1896 the two volumes of Morse's *Life and Letters* (listed below). The poems below are taken from *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, Cambridge Edition, 1 vol., edited by H. E. Scudder, 1895, still available, and the best text. The notes by Holmes reproduced in this volume are from his revised *Poetical Works* of 1883. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, often reprinted, was critically edited by Franklin T. Baker, 1928. *Oliver Wendell Holmes: Representative Selections*, edited by S. I. Hayakawa and H. M. Jones, American Writers Series, 1939, is excellent for its selections, introduction, and bibliography.

For biography and criticism, see J. T. Morse, *Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 2 vols., 1896; M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Holmes of the Breakfast-Table*, 1939; Eleanor M. Tilton, *Amiable Autocrat*, 1947; and the introduction to the volume of *Representative Selections* edited by Hayakawa and Jones (listed above).

## Old Ironsides<sup>1</sup>

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!  
 Long has it waved on high,  
 And many an eye has danced to see  
 That banner in the sky;  
 Beneath it rung the battle shout,  
 And burst the cannon's roar;—  
 'The meteor of the ocean air  
 Shall sweep the clouds no more.

5

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,  
 Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
 When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,

10

1. In 1830, just graduated from Harvard and re-enrolled as a law student, Holmes saw in the Boston *Daily Advertiser* the announcement that the frigate *Constitution* was to be demolished. "Old Ironsides," then lying in Boston's Charlestown Navy Yard, a veteran of Decatur's fleet in the Barbary Wars, had decisively vanquished the renowned British *Guerrière* (August 19, 1812) in the last British war, and was an object of national reverence. Holmes's stirring poem appeared in the *Advertiser* two days later (September

16, 1830), was widely reprinted, and circulated in broadside form in Washington. The poem is credited with having saved the ship, which was reconditioned; it certainly established young Holmes as a writer, and became part of the literature of the schoolroom for a century. In *Poems*, 1836, the author's first collection, the poem appeared as part of "Poetry: A Metrical Essay," which he had just read before the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa; after several reprintings it appeared independently, with its present title, in *Poems*, 1862.

And waves were white below,  
No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Or know the conquered knee;—  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the seal! 15

Oh, better that her shattered hulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;  
Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,  
The lightning and the gale! 20

1830, 1836

### My Aunt<sup>3</sup>

My aunt! my dear unmarried aunt!  
Long years have o'er her flown;  
Yet still she strains the aching clasp  
That binds her virgin zone;<sup>4</sup>  
I know it hurts her,—though she looks  
As cheerful as she can; 5  
Her waist is ampler than her life,  
For life is but a span.

My aunt! my poor deluded aunt!  
Her hair is almost gray; 10  
Why will she train that winter curl  
In such a spring-like way?  
How can she lay her glasses down,  
And say she reads as well,  
When through a double convex lens  
She just makes out to spell? 15

Her father—grandpapa! forgive  
This erring lip its smiles—  
Vowed she should make the finest girl  
Within a hundred miles; 20  
He sent her to a stylish school;  
'T was in her thirteenth June;  
And with her, as the rules required,  
"Two towels and a spoon."

3. Published in the *New England Magazine* for October, 1831; reprinted in the *Harbinger* volume of 1833; col-

lected in *Poems*, 1836.

4. A broad ornamental girdle or belt.

They braced my aunt against a board,25  
 To make her straight and tall;  
 They laced her up, they starved her down,  
 To make her light and snall;  
 They pinched her feet, they singed her hair,  
 They screwed it up with pins;—30  
 Oh, never mortal suffered more  
 In penance for her sins.

So, when my precious aunt was done,  
 My grandsire brought her back  
 (By daylight, lest some rabid youth35  
 Might follow on the track);  
 "Ah!" said my grandsire, as he shook  
 Some powder in his pan,<sup>5</sup>  
 "What could this lovely creature do  
 Against a desperate man!"40

Alas! nor chariot, nor barouche,<sup>6</sup>  
 Nor bandit cavalcade.  
 Tore from the trembling father's arms  
 His all-accomplished maid.  
 For her how happy had it been!45  
 And Heaven had spared to me  
 To see one sad, ungathered rose  
 On my ancestral tree.

1831, 1836

## The Chambered Nautilus<sup>7</sup>

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
 Sails the unshadowed main,—  
 The venturous bark that flings

5. In ancient breech-loading muskets and pistols, the hollow in the lock that received the priming powder.

6. Types of four-wheeled carriages then fashionable: the chariot light and open; the barouche with a folding top, facing seats, and a driver's seat in front.

7. The pearly nautilus is a cephalopod of the South Pacific and Indian oceans, which builds a spiral shell, adding a chamber each year, and was thought by the Greeks to be capable of sailing by erecting a membrane (ll. 3-5). Of this poem, Holmes wrote George Ticknor (Morse, *Life and Letters*, Vol. II, p. 278), "I am as willing to submit this to criticism as any I have written, in form as well as in substance, and I have

not seen any English verse of just the same pattern." In substance, it develops a religious idea persistent in his revolt against such concepts as original depravity, predestination, and grace, in the Calvinist tradition. Here the lowly shellfish and man are bound, by the same law of progress, to strive for constantly higher attainments. Cf. the anti-Calvinism of "The Living Temple" and "The Deacon's Masterpiece." This poem was part of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, first published in the February, 1858, installment in the *Atlantic Monthly* and in the volume of the *Autocrat* later in that year. It was collected in *Songs in Many Keys* (1862).

On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings  
 In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings, 5  
     And coral reefs lie bare,  
 Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.  
 Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
     Wrecked is the ship of pearl!  
     And every chambered cell, 10  
 Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,  
 As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,  
     Before thee lies revealed,—  
 Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!  
 Year after year beheld the silent toil 15  
     That spread his lustrous coil;  
     Still, as the spiral grew,  
 He left the past year's dwelling for the new,  
 Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
     Built up its idle door, 20  
 Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.  
 'Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,  
     Child of the wandering sea,  
     Cast from her lap, forlorn!  
 From thy dead lips a clearer note is born 25  
 Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!<sup>8</sup>  
     While on mine ear it rings,  
 Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:—  
 Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
     As the swift seasons roll! 30  
     Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
 Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
 Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
     Till thou at length art free,  
 Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea! 35

1858

### 'The Living Temple'

Not in the world of light alone,  
 Where God has built his blazing throne

8. Cf. Wordsworth's sonnet "The World Is Too Much with Us," l. 14: "Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn."  
 9. "The Living Temple," which Holmes calls "an anatomist's hymn" in the

*Autocrat*, represents another phase of his revolt against Puritanism, which defamed the body as the vessel of man's corruption. Note how the poet's imagination transforms the otherwise grue-

Nor yet alone in earth below,  
 With belted seas that come and go,  
 And endless isles of sunlit green,  
 Is all thy Maker's glory seen: 5  
 Look in upon thy wondrous frame,—  
 Eternal wisdom still the same!

The smooth, soft air with pulse-like waves  
 Flows murmuring through its hidden caves, 10  
 Whose streams of brightening purple rush,  
 Fired with a new and livelier blush,  
 While all their burden of decay  
 The ebbing current steals away,  
 And red with Nature's flame they start 15  
 From the warm fountains of the heart.

No rest that throbbing slave may ask,  
 Forever quivering o'er his task,  
 While far and wide a crimson jet  
 Leaps forth to fill the woven net 20  
 Which in unnumbered crossing tides  
 The flood of burning life divides,  
 Then, kindling each decaying part,  
 Creeps back to find the throbbing heart.

But warmed with that unchanging flame 25  
 Behold the outward moving frame,  
 Its living marbles jointed strong  
 With glistening band and silvery throng,  
 And linked to reason's guiding reins  
 By myriad rings in trembling chains, 30  
 Each graven with the threaded zone  
 Which claims it as the master's own.

See how yon beam of seeming white  
 Is braided out of seven-hued light,<sup>1</sup>  
 Yet in those lucid globes no ray 35  
 By any chance shall break astray.  
 Hark how the rolling surge of sound,  
 Arches and spirals circling round,  
 Wakes the hushed spirit through thine ear  
 With music it is heaven to hear. 40

some discoveries of the anatomist's scalpel. The poem was published in the volume of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (1858), after appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly* installment of the *Autocrat* for May, 1858. It appeared

separately among the poems of *Songs in Many Keys* (1862).

1. I.e., the seven colors of the visible spectrum into which white light is dispersed in a rainbow or a crystal.



Then mark the cloven sphere that holds  
 All thought in its mysterious folds;  
 That feels sensation's faintest thrill,  
 And flashes forth the sovereign will;  
 Think on the stormy world that dwells 45  
 Locked in its dim and clustering cells!  
 The lightning gleams of power it sheds  
 Along its hollow glassy threads!

O Father! grant thy love divine  
 To make these mystic temples thine! 50  
 When wasting age and wearying strife  
 Have sapped the leaning walls of life,  
 When darkness gathers over all,  
 And the last tottering pillars fall,  
 Take the poor dust thy mercy warms, 55  
 And mould it into heavenly forms!

1858

## The Deacon's Masterpiece

OR, THE WONDERFUL "ONE-HOSS SHAY"<sup>2</sup>  
 A LOGICAL STORY

Have you heard of the wonderful one-hoss shay,  
 That was built in such a logical way  
 It ran a hundred years to a day,  
 And then, of a sudden, it—ah, but stay,  
 I'll tell you what happened without delay, 5  
 Scaring the parson into fits,  
 Frightening people out of their wits,—  
 Have you ever heard of that, I say?

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five.  
*Georgius Secundus*<sup>3</sup> was then alive,— 10  
 Snuffy old drone from the German hive.  
 'That was the year when Lisbon-town

2. It is probably to the credit of this poem that many have read it as an amusing story, without reference to its underlying satirical allegory. Against the Calvinist theology, surviving from the Puritan past in New England, Holmes arrayed the arguments of rationalism and scientific empiricism, in literature ranging from the present comic burlesque to his serious novels and his essay, in 1880, on Jonathan Edwards. Edwards, in *The Freedom of the Will*

(1754), had produced a masterpiece of Puritan logic. Holmes's thesis in this comic ballad is that a system of logic, however perfect, must collapse if its premises are false. The poem was part of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (1858) first appearing in the installment published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for September, 1858, and later included with the poems of successive collections. 3. George II, king of England from 1727 to 1760, was German-born.

Saw the earth open and gulp her down,<sup>4</sup>  
And Braddock's<sup>5</sup> army was done so brown,  
Left without a scalp to its crown.  
It was on the terrible Earthquake-day  
That the Deacon finished the one-loss shay.<sup>6</sup>

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,  
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot,—  
In hub, tire, felloe,<sup>7</sup> in spring or thill,<sup>8</sup>  
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,  
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace,<sup>9</sup>—lurking still,  
Find it somewhere you must and will,—  
Above or below, or within or without,—  
And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,  
That a chaise *breaks down*, but doesn't *wear out*.

But the Deacon swore (as deacons do,  
With an "I dew vum," or an "I tell yeou")  
He would build one shay to beat the taown  
'N' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun';  
It should be so built that it *could n'* break daown:  
"Fur," said the Deacon, "'t 's mighty plain  
That the weakes' place mus' stan' the strain;  
'N' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain,  
Is only jest  
T' make that place uz strong uz the rest."

So the Deacon inquired of the village folk  
Where he could find the strongest oak,  
That couldn't be split nor bent nor broke,—  
That was for spokes and floor and sills;  
He sent for lancewood to make the thills;  
The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees,  
The panels of white-wood, that cuts like cheese,  
But lasts like iron for things like these;  
The hubs of logs from the "Settler's ellum,"—  
Last of its timber,—they couldn't sell 'em,  
Never an axe had seen their chips,  
And the wedges flew from between their lips,  
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips;

4. The devastating earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 evoked theological argument concerning God's agency.

5. General Edward Braddock (1695-1755), British commander in the last of the French and Indian Wars, was killed in action.

6. Actually it was in 1754, not 1755, that Edwards published *The Freedom of*

*the Will.*

7. The exterior wooden rim of a wheel.

8. The thills of a carriage are the two slender shafts between which the horse is harnessed.

9. A stout leather support by which the body of the carriage was slung to the springs.

Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw, 50  
Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin<sup>1</sup> too,  
Steel of the finest, bright and blue;  
Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide;  
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide  
I'ound in the pit when the tanner died. 55  
That was the way he "put her through."  
"There!" said the Deacon, "naow she'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess  
She was a wonder, and nothing less!  
Colts grew horses, beards turned gray, 60  
Deacon and deaconess dropped away,  
Children and grandchildren—where were they?  
But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay  
As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake-day!

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED;—it came and found 65  
The Deacon's masterpiece strong and sound.  
Eighteen hundred increased by ten;—  
"Hahnsum kerridge" they called it then.  
Eighteen hundred and twenty came;—  
Running as usual; much the same. 70  
Thirty and forty at last arrive,  
And then come fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE.

Little of all we value here  
Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year  
Without both feeling and looking queer. 75  
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,  
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.  
(This is a moral that runs at large;  
Take it.—You're welcome.—No extra charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER,—the earthquake-day,— 80  
There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay,  
A general flavor of mild decay,  
But nothing local, as one may say.  
There couldn't be,—for the Deacon's art  
Had made it so like in every part 85  
That there wasn't a chance for one to start.  
For the wheels were just as strong as the thills,  
And the floor was just as strong as the sills,  
And the panels just as strong as the floor,

1. A linchpin, like a modern cotter pin, was inserted through the end of the axletree to retain the wheel on its bearing.

And the whipple-tree<sup>2</sup> neither less nor more, 90  
 And the back crossbar as strong as the fore,  
 And spring and axle and hub *encore*.  
 And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt  
 In another hour it will be *worn out*!

First of November, 'Fifty-five! 95  
 This morning the parson takes a drive.  
 Now, small boys, get out of the way!  
 Here comes the wonderful one-hoss shay,  
 Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.  
 "Huddup!" said the parson.—Off went they. 100  
 The parson was working his Sunday's text,—  
 Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed  
 At what the—Moses—was coming next.  
 All at once the horse stood still,  
 Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill. 105  
 First a shiver, and then a thrill,  
 'Then something decidedly like a spill,—  
 And the parson was sitting upon a rock.  
 At half past nine by the meet'n'-house clock,—  
 Just the hour of the Earthquake shock! 110  
 What do you think the parson found,  
 When he got up and stared around?  
 'The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,  
 As if it had been to the mill and ground!  
 You see, of course, if you're not a dunce, 115  
 How it went to pieces all at once,—  
 All at once, and nothing first,—  
 Just as bubbles do when they burst.  
 End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.  
 Logic is logic. That's all I say. 120

1858

Dorothy Q.<sup>3</sup>

## A FAMILY PORTRAIT

Grandmother's mother: her age, I guess,  
 Thirteen summers, or something less;  
 Girlish bust, but womanly air;  
 Smooth, square forehead with uprolled hair;  
 Lips that lover has never kissed;

5

2. A bar pivoted on the frame behind the horse, to which the traces, or side harness, are fastened.

3. "Dorothy was the daughter of Judge Edmund Quincy, and the niece of Josiah Quincy, junior, the young poet and ora-

Taper fingers and slender wrist;  
Hanging sleeves of stiff brocade;  
So they painted the little maid.

On her hand a parrot green  
Sits unmoving and broods serene. 10  
Hold up the canvas full in view,—  
Look! there's a rent the light shines through,  
Dark with a century's fringe of dust,—  
That was a Red-Coat's rapier-thrust!<sup>4</sup>  
Such is the tale the lady old, 15  
Dorothy's daughter's daughter, told.

Who the painter was none may tell,—  
One whose best was not over well;  
Hard and dry, it must be confessed,  
Flat as a rose that has long been pressed; 20  
Yet in her cheek the hues are bright,  
Dainty colors of red and white,  
And in her slender shape are seen  
Hint and promise of stately mien.

Look not on her with eyes of scorn,— 25  
Dorothy Q. was a lady born!  
Ay! since the galloping Normans came,  
England's annals have known her name;<sup>1</sup>  
And still to the three-hilled rebel town<sup>2</sup>  
Dear is that ancient name's renown, 30  
For many a civic wreath they won,  
The youthful sire and the gray-haired son.

O Damsel Dorothy! Dorothy Q.!  
Strange is the gift that I owe to you;  
Such a gift as never a king 35  
Save to daughter or son might bring,—  
All my tenure of heart and hand,  
All my title to house and land;  
Mother and sister and child and wife  
And joy and sorrow and death and life! 40

tor who died just before the American Revolution, of which he was one of the most eloquent and effective promoters" [Holmes's note]. This Dorothy was the poet's maternal great-grandmother; her girlish portrait was associated with his childhood interest in the legends of his family. The poem appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1871, and was collected in *Songs of Many Seasons* (1875).

4. "The British officer had aimed at the right eye and just missed it" [unpublished manuscript note, Tilton, *Amiable Autocrat*, p. 6].

1. The Norman invasion (1066) brought such French names as Quincy into English genealogies.

2. Colonial Boston was built on three hills; Tremont Street preserves that memory in its name, once given to the city itself.

What if a hundred years ago  
 Those close-shut lips had answered No,  
 When forth the tremulous question came  
 That cost the maiden her Norman name,  
 And under the folds that look so still 45  
 The bodice swelled with the bosom's thrill?  
 Should I be I, or would it be  
 One tenth another, to nine tenths me?

Soft is the breath of a maiden's YES:  
 Not the light gossamer stirs with less; 50  
 But never a cable that holds so fast  
 Through all the battles of wave and blast,  
 And never an echo of speech or song  
 That lives in the babbling air so long!  
 There were tones in the voice that whispered then 55  
 You may hear to-day in a hundred men.

O lady and lover, how faint and far  
 Your images hover,—and here we are,  
 Solid and stirring in flesh and bone,—  
 Edward's and Dorothy's—all their own,— 60  
 A goodly record for 'Time to show  
 Of a syllable spoken so long ago!—  
 Shall I bless you, Dorothy, or forgive  
 For the tender whisper that bade me live?

It shall be a blessing, my little maid! 65  
 I will heal the stab of the Red-Coat's blade,<sup>3</sup>  
 And freshen the gold of the tarnished frame,  
 And gild with a rhyme your household name;  
 So you shall smile on us brave and bright  
 As first you greeted the morning's light, 70  
 And live untroubled by woes and fears  
 Through a second youth of a hundred years.

1871, 1875

3. "The canvas of the painting was so much decayed that it had to be replaced by a new one, in doing which the rapier

thrust was of course filled up" [Holmes's note].

# From The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table<sup>7</sup>

## I

I was just going to say, when I was interrupted,<sup>8</sup> that one of the many ways of classifying minds is under the heads of arithmetical and algebraical intellects. All economical and practical wisdom is an extension or variation of the following arithmetical formula:  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Every philosophical proposition has the more general character of the expression  $a + b = c$ . We are mere operatives, empirics, and egotists, until we learn to think in letters instead of figures.

They all stared. There is a divinity student lately come among us to whom I commonly address remarks like the above, allowing him to take a certain share in the conversation, so far as assent or pertinent questions are involved. He abused his liberty on this occasion by presuming to say that Leibnitz<sup>9</sup> had the same observation.—No, sir, I replied, he has not. But he said a mighty good thing about mathematics, that sounds something like it, and you found it, *not in the original*, but quoted by Dr. Thomas Reid.<sup>1</sup> I will tell the company what he did say, one of these days.

—If I belong to a Society of Mutual Admiration?—I blush to say that I do not at this present moment. I once did, however. It was the first association to which I ever heard the term applied; a body of scientific young men in a great foreign city<sup>2</sup> who admired their teacher, and to some extent each other. Many of them deserved it; they have become famous since. It amuses me to hear the

7. *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* resulted from Lowell's insistence that, if he undertook the editorship of the projected *Atlantic Monthly*, Holmes would agree to become a regular contributor. Installments of the *Autocrat* began with the first number of the magazine, November, 1857, and concluded with the issue for October, 1858. These were a mature development of the "table-talk" that Holmes had long before published under the same title in the *New England Magazine* (November, 1831, January, 1832). The *Autocrat* and succeeding collections represent at its best the patrician cultivation and Augustan wit that flourished with the New England renaissance, and perpetuated a long tradition in the "genteel" culture of the United States.

8. *I.e.*, twenty-five years ago, when he published the early *Autocrat* essays in the *New England Magazine*.

9. Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646–1716), German philosopher and mathematician. He contributed to the science of calculus, hence the appropri-

ateness of this allusion.

1. Founder of the Scottish school of "common-sense," optimistic toward the self-determining powers of the human mind.

2. "The 'body of scientific young men in a great foreign city' was the Société d'Observation Médicale, of Paris, of which M. Louis was president, and MM. Barth, Grisotte, and our own Dr. Bowditch were members. They agreed in admiring their justly-honored president, and thought highly of some of their associates, who have since made good their promise of distinction.

"About the time when these papers were published, the Saturday Club was founded, or, rather, found itself in existence, without any organization, almost without parentage. It was natural enough that such men as Emerson, Longfellow, Agassiz, Peirce, with Hawthorne, Motley, Sumner, when within reach, and others who would be good company for them, should meet and dine together \* \* \*" [Holmes's note].

talk of one of those beings described by Thackeray—

"Letters four do form his name"<sup>3</sup>—

about a social development which belongs to the very noblest stage of civilization. All generous companies of artists, authors, philanthropists, men of science, are, or ought to be, Societies of Mutual Admiration. A man of genius, or any kind of superiority, is not debarred from admiring the same quality in another, nor the other from returning his admiration. They may even associate together and continue to think highly of each other. \* \* \*

If the Mutuels have really nothing among them worth admiring, that alters the question. But if they are men with noble powers and qualities, let me tell you that, next to youthful love and family affections, there is no human sentiment better than that which unites the Societies of Mutual Admiration. And what would literature or art be without such associations? Who can tell what we owe to the Mutual Admiration Society of which Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher were members?<sup>4</sup> Or to that of which Addison and Steele formed the centre,<sup>5</sup> and which gave us the *Spectator*? Or to that where Johnson,<sup>6</sup> and Goldsmith, and Burke, and Reynolds, and Beauclerk, and Boswell, most admiring among all admirers, met together? Was there any great harm in the fact that the Irvings and Paulding<sup>7</sup> wrote in company? or any unpardonable cabal in the literary union of Verplanck and Bryant and Sands,<sup>8</sup> and as many more as they chose to associate with them? \* \* \*

This business of conversation is a very serious matter. There are men whom it weakens one to talk with an hour more than a day's fasting would do. Mark this which I am going to say, for it is as good as a working professional man's advice, and costs you nothing: It is better to lose a pint of blood from your veins than to have a nerve tapped. Nobody measures your nervous force as it runs away, nor bandages your brain and marrow after the operation.

There are men of *esprit*<sup>9</sup> who are excessively exhausting to some people. They are the talkers who have what may be called *jerky*

3. Consider "snob," or "liar," or both, as the four-letter word in this context (Thackeray wrote *The Book of Snobs*). The line of verse, however, is quoted from Coleridge's "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter" (1798), a satire on Sir William Pitt, prime minister of England, whose name has four letters.

4. This group met for fellowship in the Mermaid Tavern, London.

5. Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729), great English essayists of the *Spectator* papers, together with Swift and other London wits were associated in the Kit-Cat

Club.

6. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was the center of this coterie, known as "The Club"; cf. Boswell's *Johnson*.

7. Washington Irving collaborated with his older brothers, Peter and William, and with James K. Paulding in the *Salmagundi* essays, earliest work of the "Knickerbocker" coterie of New Yorkers.

8. The poet Bryant collaborated with Gulian Verplanck and Robert C. Sands, fellow "Knickerbockers," in *The Talisman* (1827-1830), a gift book.

9. French, meaning "spirited wit."



minds. Their thoughts do not run in the natural order of sequence. They say bright things on all possible subjects, but their zigzags rack you to death. After a jolting half-hour with one of these jerky companions, talking with a dull friend affords great relief. It is like taking the cat in your lap after holding a squirrel.

What a comfort a dull but kindly person is, to be sure, at times! A ground-glass shade over a gas-lamp does not bring more solace to our dazzled eyes than such a one to our minds. \* \* \*

—Little localized powers, and little narrow streaks of specialized knowledge, are things men are very apt to be conceited about. Nature is very wise; but for this encouraging principle how many small talents and little accomplishments would be neglected! Talk about conceit as much as you like, it is to human character what salt is to the ocean; it keeps it sweet, and renders it endurable. Say rather it is like the natural unguent of the sea-fowl's plumage, which enables him to shed the rain that falls on him and the wave in which he dips. When one has had *all* his conceit taken out of him, when he has lost *all* his illusions, his feathers will soon soak through, and he will fly no more.

"So you admire conceited people, do you?" said the young lady who has come to the city to be finished off for—the duties of life.

I am afraid you do not study logic at your school, my dear. It does not follow that I wish to be pickled in brine because I like a salt-water plunge at Nahant.<sup>8</sup> I say that conceit is just as natural a thing to human minds as a centre is to a circle. But little-minded people's thoughts move in such small circles that five minutes' conversation gives you an arc long enough to determine their whole curve. An arc in the movement of a large intellect does not sensibly differ from a straight line. Even if it have the third vowel as its centre, it does not soon betray it. The highest thought, that is, is the most seemingly impersonal; it does not obviously imply any individual centre.

Audacious self-esteem, with good ground for it, is always imposing. What resplendent beauty that must have been which could have authorized Phryne to "peel"<sup>9</sup> in the way she did! What fine speeches are those two: "*Non omnis moriar*,"<sup>1</sup> and "I have taken all knowledge to be my province!"<sup>2</sup> Even in common people, conceit has the virtue of making them cheerful; the man who thinks his wife, his baby, his house, his horse, his dog, and himself severally unequalled, is almost sure to be a good-humored person, though liable to be tedious at times.

8. On the seashore near Boston.

9. Phryne, a fourth century Athenian courtesan of fabulous beauty, the reputed model for Praxiteles' "Aphrodite"; during a festival for Poseidon, god of the Mediterranean, she publicly

disrobed and entered the sea.

1. Cf. Horace, *Odes*, III, xxx, l. 6: "I shall not altogether die."

2. From a letter written by Francis Bacon to Lord Burghley in 1592.

—What are the great faults of conversation? Want of ideas, want of words, want of manners, are the principal ones, I suppose you think. I don't doubt it, but I will tell you what I have found spoil more good talks than anything else;—long arguments on special points between people who differ on the fundamental principles upon which these points depend. No men can have satisfactory relations with each other until they have agreed on certain *ultima* of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation, and unless they have sense enough to trace the secondary questions depending upon these ultimate beliefs to their source. In short, just as a written constitution is essential to the best social order, so a code of finalities is a necessary condition of profitable talk between two persons. Talking is like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hand on the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music.

—Do you mean to say the pun-question<sup>3</sup> is not clearly settled in your minds? Let me lay down the law upon the subject. Life and language are alike sacred. Homicide and *verbicide*—that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life—are alike forbidden. Manslaughter, which is the meaning of the one, is the same as man's laughter, which is the end of the other. A pun is *prima facie*<sup>4</sup> an insult to the person you are talking with. It implies utter indifference to or sublime contempt for his remarks, no matter how serious. I speak of total depravity, and one says all that is written on the subject is deep raving. I have committed my self-respect by talking with such a person. I should like to commit him, but cannot, because he is a nuisance. Or I speak of geological convulsions, and he asks me what was the cosine of Noah's ark; also, whether the Deluge was not a deal huger than any modern inundation.

A pun does not commonly justify a blow in return. But if a blow were given for such a cause, and death ensued, the jury would be judges both of the facts and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided before Miller, J.,<sup>5</sup> Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, When charity was like a top? It was in evidence that Doc preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum." Doe then—and not till then—struck Roe, and his head happening to hit a bound volume of the Monthly Rag-Bag and Stolen Miscellany, intense mortification ensued with a fatal result. The chief laid down his notions of the law to his brother

3. In the following paragraphs, Holmes's argument against puns is punctured by his own.

4. On first appearance; *i.e.*, by nature.

5. In legal parlance, "Miller, Judge";

but Holmes refers also to Joe Miller (1684–1738), famous English comedian, whose popular survival was occasioned by successive editions, over two centuries, of *Joe Miller's Jest-Book*.

justices, who unanimously replied, "Jest so." The chief rejoined, that no man should jest so without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun ordered to be burned by the sheriff. The bound volume was forfeited as a deodand,<sup>6</sup> but not claimed.

People that make puns are like wanton boys that put coppers on the railroad tracks. They amuse themselves and other children, but their little trick may upset a freight train of conversation for the sake of a battered witticism.

I will thank you, B. F., to bring down two books, of which I will mark the places on this slip of paper. (While he is gone, I may say that this boy, our landlady's youngest, is called BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, after the celebrated philosopher of that name. A highly merited compliment.)

I wished to refer to two eminent authorities. Now be so good as to listen. The great moralist<sup>7</sup> says: "To trifle with the vocabulary which is the vehicle of social intercourse is to tamper with the currency of human intelligence. He who would violate the sanctities of his mother tongue would invade the recesses of the paternal till without remorse, and repeat the banquet of Saturn<sup>8</sup> without an indigestion."

And, once more, listen to the historian.<sup>9</sup> "The Puritans hated puns. The Bishops were notoriously addicted to them. The Lords Temporal carried them to the verge of license. Majesty itself must have its Royal quibble. 'Ye be burly, my Lord of Burleigh,' said Queen Elizabeth, 'but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my Lord of Leicester.' The gravest wisdom and the highest breeding lent their sanction to the practice. Lord Bacon playfully declared himself a descendant of 'Og, the King of Bashan.'<sup>1</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, with his last breath, reproached the soldier who brought him water, for wasting a casque full upon a dying man. A courtier, who saw Othello performed at the Globe Theatre, remarked, that the blackamoor was a brute, and not a man. 'Thou hast reason,' replied a great Lord, 'according to Plato<sup>2</sup> his saying; for this be a two-legged animal *with* feathers.' The fatal habit became universal. The language was corrupted. The infection spread to the national conscience. Political double-dealings naturally grew out of verbal double meanings. The teeth of the new dragon were sown by the Cadmus<sup>3</sup>

6. Literally, "given to God"; a forfeit to the crown or church for charitable use.

7. Several critics have detected a parody of Dr. Samuel Johnson in the following pretended quotation.

8. One of the myths of Saturn has him consuming all but one of his children.

9. As above, what follows is a parody, this time of the historian T. B. Macaulay (*cf.* the following paragraph).

1. *Cf.* Deuteronomy iii: 1.

2. Diogenes Laertius said: "Plato \* \* \* defined man to be a two-legged animal without feathers"; but here Othello is ridiculously endowed *with* feathers, since he smothered Desdemona in her bed.

3. The Cadmus of Greek myth killed a dragon and sowed its teeth, reaping a crop of warriors who slew each other.

who introduced the alphabet of equivocation. What was levity in the time of the Tudors grew to regicide and revolution in the age of the Stuarts." \* \* \*

—What if, instead of talking this morning, I should read you a copy of verses, with critical remarks by the author? Any of the company can retire that like.

#### ALBUM VERSES

When Eve had led her lord away,  
And Cain had killed his brother,  
The stars and flowers, the poets say,  
Agreed with one another,

To cheat the cunning tempter's art,  
And teach the race its duty,  
By keeping on its wicked heart  
Their eyes of light and beauty.

A million sleepless lids, they say,  
Will be at least a warning;  
And so the flowers would watch by day,  
'The stars from eve to morning.

On hill and prairie, field and lawn,  
Their dewy eyes upturning,  
The flowers still watch from reddening dawn  
Till western skies are burning.

Alas! each hour of daylight tells  
A tale of shame so crushing,  
That some turn white as sea-bleached shells,  
And some are always blushing.

But when the patient stars look down  
On all their light discovers,  
The traitor's smile, the murderer's frown,  
The lips of lying lovers,

They try to shut their saddening eyes,  
And in the vain endeavor  
We see them twinkling in the skies,  
And so they wink forever.

What do you think of these verses, my friends?—Is that piece an impromptu? said my landlady's daughter. (Act. 19 +. Tender-eyed blonde. Long ringlets. Cameo pin. Gold pencil-case on a chain. Locket. Bracelet. Album. Autograph book. Accordeon. Reads Byron,

Tupper, and Sylvanus Cobb, Junior,<sup>7</sup> while her mother makes the puddings. Says "Yes?" when you tell her anything.)—*Oui et non, ma petite*,—Yes and no, my child. Five of the seven verses were written off-hand; the other two took a week,—that is, were hanging round the desk in a ragged, forlorn, unrhymed condition as long as that. All poets will tell you just such stories. *C'est le DERNIER pas qui coute*.<sup>8</sup> Don't you know how hard it is for some people to get out of a room after their visit is really over? They want to be off, and you want to have them off, but they don't know how to manage it. One would think they had been built in your parlor or study, and were waiting to be launched. I have contrived a sort of ceremonial inclined plane for such visitors, which being lubricated with certain smooth phrases, I back them down, metaphorically speaking, stern-foremost, into their "native element," the great ocean of out-doors. Well, now, there are poems as hard to get rid of as these rural visitors. They come in glibly, use up all the serviceable rhymes, *day, ray, beauty, duty, skies, eyes, other, brother, mountain, fountain*, and the like; and so they go on until you think it is time for the wind-up, and the wind-up won't come on any terms. So they lie about until you get sick of the sight of them, and end by thrusting some cold scrap of a final couplet upon them, and turning them out of doors. I suspect a good many "impromptus" could tell just such a story as the above.—Here turning to our landlady, I used an illustration which pleased the company much at the time, and has since been highly commended. "Madam," I said, "you can pour three gills and three quarters of honey from that pint jug, if it is full, in less than one minute; but, Madam, you could not empty that last quarter of a gill, though you were turned into a marble Hebe," and held the vessel upside down for a thousand years."

One gets tired to death of the old, old rhymes, such as you see in that copy of verses,—which I don't mean to abuse, or to praise either. I always feel as if I were a cobbler, putting new top-leathers to an old pair of bootsoles and bodies, when I am fitting sentiments to these venerable jingles.

.	.	.	.	.	.	.	youth
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	morning
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	truth
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	warning.

Nine tenths of the "Juvenile Poems" written spring out of the above musical and suggestive coincidences.

7. Martin Farquhar Tupper (1810–1889) published many editions of his versified moral maxims, *Proverbial Philosophy* (1838); Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. (1823–1887) is credited with literally

thousands of sentimental stories.

8. Usually, in the French proverb, "it is the *first* step that costs"; Holmes makes it the *last*.

9. Mythological cupbearer to the gods.

"Yes?" said our landlady's daughter. \* \* \*

—Self-made men?—Well, yes. Of course every body likes and respects self-made men. It is a great deal better to be made in that way than not to be made at all. Are any of you younger people old enough to remember that Irishman's house on the marsh at Cambridgeport, which house he built from drain to chimney-top with his own hands? It took him a good many years to build it, and one could see that it was a little out of plumb, and a little wavy in outline, and a little queer and uncertain in general aspect. A regular hand could certainly have built a better house; but it was a very good house for a "self-made" carpenter's house, and people praised it, and said how remarkably well the Irishman had succeeded. They never thought of praising the fine blocks of houses a little farther on.

Your self-made man, whittled into shape with his own jack-knife, deserves more credit, if that is all, than the regular engine-turned article, shaped by the most approved pattern, and French-polished by society and travel. But as to saying that one is every way the equal of the other, that is another matter. The right of strict social discrimination of all things and persons, according to their merits, native or acquired, is one of the most precious republican privileges. I take the liberty to exercise it when I say that, *other things being equal*, in most relations of life I prefer a man of family.

What do I mean by a man of family?—O, I'll give you a general idea of what I mean. Let us give him a first-rate fit out; it costs us nothing.

Four or five generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen; among them a member of his Majesty's Council for the Province, a Governor or so, one or two Doctors of Divinity, a member of Congress, not later than the time of long boots with tassels. \* \* \*

No, my friends, I go (always, *other things being equal*) for the man who inherits family traditions and the cumulative humanities of at least four or five generations. Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books, who have not handled them from infancy. Do you suppose our dear *didascalos*<sup>7</sup> over there ever read *Poli Synopsis*, or consulted *Castelli Lexicon*,<sup>8</sup> while he was growing up to their stature? Not he; but virtue passed through the hem of their parchment and leather garments whenever he touched them,<sup>9</sup> as the precious drugs sweated

7. "Our dear *didascalos* [teacher] was meant for Professor James Russell Lowell, now Minister to England. It requires the union of exceptional native gifts and generations of training to bring the 'natural man' of New England to the completeness of scholarly manhood, such as that which adds new distinction to the name he bears, already

remarkable \* \* \* " [Holmes's note].

8. Matthew Poole (1625-1679) published in Latin the scholarly *Synopses of Sacred Scriptures* \* \* \* (London, 1669-1676). Another standard scholarly work was Bartolommeo Castelli's *Lexicon of Graeco-Roman Medicine* (1713).

9. Cf. Luke vi: 17-19; Mark v: 25-30.

through the bat's handle in the Arabian story. I tell you he is at home wherever he smells the invigorating fragrance of Russia leather.<sup>1</sup> No self-made man feels so. One may, it is true, have all the antecedents I have spoken of, and yet be a boor or a shabby fellow. One may have none of them, and yet be fit for councils and courts. Then let them change places. Our social arrangement has this great beauty, that its strata shift up and down as they change specific gravity, without being clogged by layers of prescription. But I still insist on my democratic liberty of choice, and I go for the man with the gallery of family portraits against the one with the twenty-five cent daguerrotype, unless I find out that the last is the better of the two. \* \* \*

1857, 1858

1. *I.e.*, fine bindings.

## JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL (1819-1891)

James Russell Lowell conscientiously represented the patrician ideal of those who demand responsible leadership in return for democracy's highest benefits. As a spokesman for this tradition, he was less the Brahmin than Holmes, and had higher expectations of the people as a whole. Elmwood, his birthplace, the ancestral home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, remained throughout his life the hub of his versatile activities. Gifted, tireless, and by temperament both the humanitarian and the humanist, he gave himself zealously to social reform and the antislavery movement; he made a career as poet, critic, editor, and Harvard professor; and without seeking office, he participated in public leadership from the level of local politics to that of the national party councils and foreign diplomacy. Small wonder if his literary critics have

been unable to discover a convincing unity in the brilliant but disparate accomplishments of his pen.

The son of a Unitarian clergyman of old family but somewhat limited means, Lowell was graduated in 1838 from Harvard College, and in 1840 from the Law School. The year before, he had sold his first poem, and he soon found the magazines, especially the popular *Graham's*, friendly to his verse and critical articles. Within two years he had collected the poems of *A Year's Life* (1841), and left the practice of law in favor of literature.

In 1843, with Robert Carter, he established and edited *The Pioneer*. Reflecting its founder's belief that a periodical of high literary quality could survive without concessions to mass appeal, the magazine lived only three months, but it foreshad-

owed the famous *Atlantic Monthly*, of which Lowell became the first editor in 1857. His second collection, *Poems*, appeared in 1844. That year he married Maria White, whose devotion to abolition and to humanitarian causes perhaps strengthened his own. They settled in Philadelphia, where Lowell had been called as editorial writer for *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, an antislavery periodical. He began also to contribute articles against slavery to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and other periodicals, including the *London Daily News*. A collection of his literary essays, *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets*, appeared in 1845, and was reprinted in London.

Now well established as a writer, he returned to Elmwood in 1846, to experience a virtual triumph that summer when the first of *The Biglow Papers* appeared in the *Boston Courier* (June 17, 1846). The series grew to nine numbers, and gained enormous popularity for its audacious opposition to the Mexican War, which free-soil readers regarded as an elaborate conspiracy among southern politicians for the extension of slave territory by conquest. The success of these letters was as much literary as political. Hosea Biglow's shrewd and homespun wit was enormously amusing, and his "letters" represented the first successful effort to employ the Yankee dialect and humor—an established comic tradition—in satirical poetry of genuine excellence. The series was issued as a volume in 1848, at the conclusion of the war. In 1862, at a

moment of northern despondency in the Civil War, Hosea Biglow again appeared, now as a stalwart defender of northern policy and a sharp-witted satirist of the Confederacy.

The year 1848 was truly Lowell's *annus mirabilis*. Then only twenty-nine, he collected his two-volume *Poems: Second Series*, and published *The Biglow Papers* and two new masterpieces, *The Vision of Sir Launfal* and *A Fable for Critics*. The former marks the high point of Lowell's earlier romanticism. An ethical romance inspired by the Arthurian legends, it taught that Holiness and the Grail do not wait at the end of chivalric adventure, but are found in the heart and in the wooden cup of charity. The poem remained a favorite for nearly a century, and its "Prelude" is still one of the most familiar of American poems of nature. *A Fable for Critics* was a daring publication for a young author, impishly dissecting the leading authors of the day, including reverend seniors such as Bryant and Cooper. Only an accepted member of the family, and one armed with Lowell's wit, urbane good nature, and sense of justice, could have accomplished it without disaster. Disarmingly and shrewdly, he hung up his own portrait as one "who's striving Parnassus to climb / With a whole bale of *isms*" on his back. Many of his comments still have value as impressionistic sketches, and their wit, at least, remains untarnished.

When his literary fame was at its greatest, Lowell reached a crucial turning point of his life.



Between 1847 and 1853, death took three of his four children, and in 1853, the beloved and frail Maria White. He published travel sketches resulting from a trip abroad in 1851-1852 and gave a few lectures, but the creative fire was banked for a time.

In 1855, he was appointed to succeed Longfellow as Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard, and he served with distinction in this capacity, particularly as a brilliant lecturer, until 1872. He joined with the founders of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857, and as editor during its first five years, he helped to shape its policy. This activity, and his remarriage in 1857, brought again a widening of his circle of literary association and interest. The events of the Civil War restored him to literary prominence with the resumption of *The Biglow Papers* which appeared at intervals in the *Atlantic Monthly* between January, 1862, and May, 1866, and were published as a collected *Second Series* in 1867.

In 1864 he became joint editor, with Charles E. Norton, of the *North American Review*, and he maintained this distinguished connection until he resigned his professorship at Harvard. At this time he made his reputation as a memorial poet, delivering, on public occasions, such lofty and stirring odes as the "Commemoration Ode" (1865), and, in 1875, the "Concord Centennial Ode" and "Under the Old Elm." His poetry was becoming noticeably more restrained and formal in spirit, but also more thoughtful. During this period, he published two

volumes of poems—*Under the Willows* (1869) and *The Cathedral* (1869, dated 1870)—and collections of his critical and familiar essays—*Among My Books* (1870; *Second Series*, 1876) and *My Study Windows* (1871). His literary criticism was now recognized at home and abroad, and on his trip to England (1872-1874) he was widely celebrated, and awarded honorary degrees at Oxford and Cambridge.

On his return, Lowell again took an active part in politics, particularly as a public speaker. He was a delegate to the Republican national convention in 1876, and sailed as American ambassador to Spain in July, 1877. In 1880 he became ambassador to Great Britain, where, as a cultural representative of the United States, his services were widely recognized. Among the several important speeches during his five years in this post, the most notable was "Democracy," delivered at Birmingham in 1844.

In the six years following his retirement from diplomacy, Lowell lived quietly at Elmwood, except for brief trips abroad in 1888 and 1889. He collected his essays and speeches: *Democracy and Other Addresses* (1887), *Political Essays* (1888), and *Latest Literary Essays* (1891). *The Old English Dramatists* was posthumously published in 1892. He collected the poems of *Heartsease and Rue* (1888). He edited his collected works in ten volumes. On August 21, 1891, he died at Elmwood. He was enormously gifted, but his meteoric writings do not suggest

the inward order of a great author. However, the selections below are still alive, and lively records of the culture that produced them.

The standard text is the Riverside Edition, on which the selections in this volume are based. It was published as *The Writings of James Russell Lowell*, 10 vols., edited by James Russell Lowell, 1890. To this were added Vol. XI, *Latest Literary Essays and Addresses* \* \* \*, 1891, and Vol. XII, *The Old English Dramatists*, 1892. The *Letters* \* \* \*, 2 vols., edited by Charles E. Norton, appeared in 1894; and the *Life*, 2 vols., by H. E. Scudder, in 1901; the texts of the Riverside Edition, together with these supplementary volumes, were reprinted under the editorial supervision of Charles E. Nor-

ton as the Elmwood Edition, 16 vols., 1904. Norton's *Letters* \* \* \* was extended to 3 vols. in 1904. The best one-volume collection is *The Complete Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell*, Cambridge Edition, edited by H. E. Scudder, 1897, with valuable notes. A good one-volume selection of the prose and poetry, in the American Writers Series, was edited by H. H. Clark and Norman Foerster, 1949. M. A. DeWolfe Howe edited *New Letters of James Russell Lowell*, 1932. Thelma M. Smith edited *The Uncollected Poetry of James Russell Lowell*, 1950.

The standard biography is H. E. Scudder, *James Russell Lowell: A Biography*, 2 vols., 1901, included in the Elmwood Edition. Also useful are E. E. Hale, Jr., *James Russell Lowell and His Friends*, 1899; Ferris Greenslet, *James Russell Lowell: His Life and Work*, 1905; Richmond C. Beatty, *James Russell Lowell*, 1942; and Leon Howard, *Victorian Knight-Errant*, 1952.

## From A Fable for Critics<sup>6</sup>

READER! *walk up at once (it will soon be too late) and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate*

### A FABLE FOR CRITICS; OR, BETTER,

*(I like, as a thing that the reader's first fancy may strike,  
an old-fashioned title-page,  
such as presents a tabular view of the volume's contents,)*

### A GLANCE

AT A FEW OF OUR LITERARY PROGENIES  
(Mrs. Malaprop's word)<sup>7</sup>

FROM

### THE TUB OF DIOGENES;<sup>8</sup>

A VOCAL AND MUSICAL MEDLEY,

THAT IS,

A SERIES OF JOKES

### BY A WONDERFUL QUIZ

*who accompanies himself with a rub-a-dub-dub, full of spirit and grace, on the top of the tub.*

Set forth in October, the 21st day, In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway.

6. Lowell's delight in this *jeu d'esprit*, as he termed it, has been shared by his readers since it first appeared in 1848. Loosely modeled after other critical

essays in verse (Alexander Pope's *Dunciad*, Leigh Hunt's *Feast of the Poets*), the *Fable* avoids extravagant satire or praise, aiming rather at witty criticism

\* \* \*

"There comes Emerson first, whose rich words, every one,  
 Are like gold nails<sup>2</sup> in temples to hang trophies on,  
 Whose prose is grand verse, while his verse, the Lord knows,  
 Is some of it pr—No, 'tis not even prose;  
 I'm speaking of metres; some poems have welled 5  
 From those rare depths of soul that have ne'er been excelled;  
 They're not epics, but that doesn't matter a pin,  
 In creating, the only hard thing's to begin;  
 A grass-blade's no easier to make than an oak;  
 If you've once found the way, you've achieved the grand stroke; 10  
 In the worst of his poems are mines of rich matter,  
 But thrown in a heap with a crash and a clatter;  
 Now it is not one thing nor another alone  
 Makes a poem, but rather the general tone,  
 The something pervading, uniting the whole, 15  
 The before unconceived, unconceivable soul,  
 So that just in removing this trifle or that, you  
 Take away, as it were, a chief limb of the statue;  
 Roots, wood, bark, and leaves singly perfect may be,  
 But, clapt hodge-podge together, they don't make a tree. 20

"But, to come back to Emerson (whom, by the way,  
 I believe we left waiting),—his is, we may say,  
 A Greek head on right Yankee shoulders, whose range  
 Has Olympus for one pole, for t'other the Exchange;<sup>3</sup>  
 He seems, to my thinking (although I'm afraid 25  
 The comparison must, long ere this, have been made),  
 A Plotinus-Montaigne,<sup>4</sup> where the Egyptian's gold mist  
 And the Gascon's shrewd wit cheek-by-jowl coexist;  
 All admire, and yet scarcely six converts he's got  
 To I don't (nor they either) exactly know what; 30

of contemporary American writers. The setting of the title page was carefully designed by Lowell to disguise the fact that it, too, is verse, suggesting the tone of casual humor of the entire book. Speaking several years later of the composition of the *Fable*, Lowell said that it was extemporized and sent off in daily installments to his friend Charles F. Briggs in New York, to whom he dedicated and gave the book. However, from letters passing between him and Briggs, it appears that he sent off some six hundred lines in the fall, and followed them with successive installments over a period of months, until August, 1848. The title page of the first edition gave the date as "October, the 21st day, in the year '48"; but the book actually came from the press on the twenty-fifth of the month.

7. Mrs. Malaprop, in Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), had a genius for mis-using words.

8. Diogenes (412?–323 B.C.), Greek Cynic philosopher, according to tradition, lived in a tub, and from there ridiculed conventional society.

2. Cf. Ecclesiastes xii: 11: "The words of the wise are \* \* \* as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies."

3. The contrast between the practical and the idealistic aspects of Emerson's nature is suggested by these opposites—the home of the gods of Greece and the stock exchange.

4. Plotinus (205–270), a Roman Neoplatonic philosopher born in Egypt; Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533–1592), French essayist, known for his skeptical and sophisticated wit.

For though he builds glorious temples, 'tis odd  
 He leaves never a doorway to get in a god.  
 'Tis refreshing to old-fashioned people like me  
 To meet such a primitive Pagan as he,  
 In whose mind all creation is duly respected 35  
 As parts of himself—just a little projected;  
 And who's willing to worship the stars and the sun,  
 A convert to—nothing but Emerson.  
 So perfect a balance there is in his head,  
 That he talks of things sometimes as if they were dead; 40  
 Life, nature, love, God, and affairs of that sort,  
 He looks at as merely ideas; in short,  
 As if they were fossils stuck round in a cabinet,  
 Of such vast extent that our earth's a mere dab in it;  
 Composed just as he is inclined to conjecture her, 45  
 Namely, one part pure earth, ninety-nine parts pure lecturer;  
 You are filled with delight at his clear demonstration,  
 Each figure, word, gesture, just fits the occasion,  
 With the quiet precision of science he'll sort 'em,  
 But you can't help suspecting the whole a *post mortem*. 50

"There are persons, mole-blind to the soul's make and style,  
 Who insist on a likeness 'twixt him and Carlyle;<sup>5</sup>  
 To compare him with Plato<sup>6</sup> would be vastly fairer,  
 Carlyle's the more burly, but E. is the rarer;  
 He sees fewer objects, but clearer, truelier, 55  
 If C.'s as original, E.'s more peculiar;  
 That he's more of a man you might say of the one,  
 Of the other he's more of an Emerson;  
 C.'s the Titan, as shaggy of mind as of limb,—  
 E. the clear-eyed Olympian, rapid and slim; 60  
 The one's two thirds Norseman, the other half Greek,  
 Where the one's most abounding, the other's to seek;  
 C.'s generals require to be seen in the mass,—  
 E.'s specialties gain if enlarged by the glass;  
 C. gives nature and God his own fits of the blues, 65  
 And rims common-sense things with mystical hues,—  
 E. sits in a mystery calm and intense,  
 And looks coolly around him with sharp common-sense;  
 C. shows you how every-day matters unite  
 With the dim transdiurnal recesses of night,— 70  
 While E., in a plain, preternatural way,  
 Makes mysteries matters of mere every day;

5. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), English essayist and historian.

6. Plato (427–347 B.C.), Greek philosopher.

C. draws all his characters quite *à la* Fuseli,<sup>7</sup>—  
 Not sketching their bundles of muscles and thews illy,  
 He paints with a brush so untamed and profuse 75  
 They seem nothing but bundles of muscles and thews;  
 E. is rather like Flaxman,<sup>8</sup> lines strait and severe,  
 And a colorless outline, but full, round, and clear;—  
 To the men he thinks worthy he frankly accords  
 The design of a white marble statue in words. 80  
 C. labors to get at the centre, and then  
 Take a reckoning from there of his actions and men;  
 E. calmly assumes the said centre as granted,  
 And, given himself, has whatever is wanted.

“He has imitators in scores, who omit 85  
 No part of the man but his wisdom and wit,—  
 Who go carefully o’er the sky-blue of his brain,  
 And when he has skimmed it once, skim it again;  
 If at all they resemble him, you may be sure it is  
 Because their shoals mirror his mists and obscurities, 90  
 As a mud-puddle seems deep as heaven for a minute,  
 While a cloud that floats o’er is reflected within it.

\* \* \*

“There is Bryant, as quiet, as cool, and as dignified,  
 As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignifed,  
 Save when by reflection ’tis kindled o’ nights 95  
 With a semblance of flame by the chill Northern Lights.  
 He may rank (Griswold<sup>9</sup> says so) first bard of your nation  
 (There’s no doubt that he stands in supreme iccolation),  
 Your topmost Parnassus<sup>1</sup> he may set his heel on,  
 But no warm applauses come, peal following peal on,— 100  
 He’s too smooth and too polished to hang any zeal on:  
 Unqualified merits, I’ll grant, if you choose, he has ’em,  
 But he lacks the one merit of kindling enthusiasm;  
 If he stir you at all, it is just, on my soul,  
 Like being stirred up with the very North Pole. 105

“He is very nice reading in summer, but *inter*  
*Nos*,<sup>2</sup> we don’t want *extra* freezing in winter;

7. Johann Heinrich Füssli (1742–1825), German-Swiss engraver and painter, whose illustrations for Milton’s *Paradise Lost* are extravagant in anatomical detail.

8. John Flaxman (1755–1826), English sculptor and draftsman, whose drawings illustrating Homer’s and Dante’s works are in the classic pattern.

9. Rufus Wilmot Griswold (1815–

1857), editor of the then popular *Poets and Poetry of America* (1842).

1. Parnassus, mountain in Greece, sacred to Apollo, the god of music and poetry, according to Greek myth was the one mountain whose summit reached above the waves in the Flood.

2. Latin, meaning “among ourselves,” or “between us.” Lowell makes a play on this and *extra* [*nos*].

Take him up in the depth of July, my advice is,  
 When you feel an Egyptian devotion to ices.<sup>3</sup>  
 But, deduct all you can, there's enough that's right good in him,  
 He has a true soul for field, river, and wood in him; 111  
 And his heart, in the midst of brick walls, or where'er it is,  
 Glows, softens, and thrills with the tenderest charities—  
 To you mortals that delve in this trade-ridden planet?  
 No, to old Berkshire's hills, with their limestone and granite. 115  
 If you're one who *in loco* (add *foco* here) *desipis*,<sup>4</sup>  
 You will get of his outermost heart (as I guess) a picce;  
 But you'd get deeper down if you came as a precipice,  
 And would break the last seal of its inwardest fountain,  
 If you only could palm yourself off for a mountain. 120  
 Mr. Quivis,<sup>5</sup> or somebody quite as discerning,  
 Some scholar who's hourly expecting his learning,  
 Calls B. the American Wordsworth; but Wordsworth  
 May be rated at more than your whole tuneful herd's worth.  
 No, don't be absurd, he's an excellent Bryant; 125  
 But, my friends, you'll endanger the life of your client,  
 By attempting to stretch him up into a giant:  
 If you choose to compare him, I think there are two per-  
 -sons fit for a parallel—Thomson and Cowper;<sup>6</sup>  
 I don't mean exactly,—there's something of each, 130  
 There's T.'s love of nature, C.'s penchant to preach;  
 Just mix up their minds so that C.'s spice of craziness  
 Shall balance and neutralize T.'s turn for laziness,  
 And it gives you a brain cool, quite frictionless, quiet,  
 Whose internal police nips the buds of all riot,— 135  
 A brain like a permanent strait-jacket put on  
 The heart that strives vainly to burst off a button,—  
 A brain which, without being slow or mechanic,  
 Does more than a larger less drilled, more volcanic;  
 He's a Cowper condensed, with no craziness bitten, 140  
 And the advantage that Wordsworth before him had written.

"But, my dear little bardlings, don't prick up your ears  
 Nor suppose I would rank you and Bryant as peers;

3. A play on the name of Isis, Egyptian goddess.

4. *I.e.*, foolish in or about a certain place. By adding *foco* ("at one's fire-side"), Lowell also puns about a New York Democratic faction supported by Bryant. The "loco-focos" brought matches to a party caucus in case their opponents turned off the gaslights.

5. "Mr. Anyone" or "Whoever-he-is."

6. James Thomson (1700-1748), author of *The Seasons* (1730), graphic in

its description of nature, and *The Castle of Indolence* (1748); William Cowper (1731-1800), author of *Olney Hymns* (1779) and *The Task* (1785), and mentally unstable. Lowell added the following note: "To demonstrate quickly and easily how per-/versely absurd 'tis to sound this name *Cowper*, / As people in general call him named *super*, / I remark that he rhymes it himself with horse-trooper."

If I call him an iceberg, I don't mean to say  
 There is nothing in that which is grand in its way; 145  
 He is almost the one of your poets that knows  
 How much grace, strength, and dignity lie in Repose;  
 If he sometimes fall short, he is too wise to mar  
 His thought's modest fulness by going too far;  
 'Twould be well if your authors should all make a trial 150  
 Of what virtue there is in severe self-denial,  
 And measure their writings by Hesiod's<sup>7</sup> staff,  
 Which teaches that all has less value than half.

"There is Whittier, whose swelling and vehement heart  
 Strains the strait-breasted drab of the Quaker apart, 155  
 And reveals the live Man, still supreme and erect,  
 Underneath the bemummying wrappers of sect;  
 There was ne'er a man born who had more of the swing  
 Of the true lyric bard and all that kind of thing;  
 And his failures arise (though he seem not to know it) 160  
 From the very same cause that has made him a poet,—  
 A fervor of mind which knows no separation  
 'Twixt simple excitement and pure inspiration,  
 As my Pythoness<sup>8</sup> erst sometimes erred from not knowing  
 If 'twere I or mere wind through her tripod was blowing; 165  
 Let his mind once get head in its favorite direction  
 And the torrent of verse bursts the dams of reflection,  
 While, borne with the rush of the metre along,  
 The poet may chance to go right or go wrong,  
 Content with the whirl and delirium of song; 170  
 Then his grammar's not always correct, nor his rhymes,  
 And he's prone to repeat his own lyrics sometimes,  
 Not his best, though, for those are struck off at white-heats  
 When the heart in his breast like a trip-hammer beats,  
 And can ne'er be repeated again any more 175  
 Than they could have been carefully plotted before:  
 Like old what's-his-name<sup>9</sup> there at the battle of Hastings  
 (Who, however, gave more than mere rhythmical bastings),  
 Our Quaker leads off metaphorical fights  
 For reform and whatever they call human rights, 180  
 Both singing and striking in front of the war,  
 And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor;

7. Greek didactic poet of the eighth century B.C.

8. The priestess of the oracle at Delphi, named the Pythia, inhaled the vapors of the chasm while seated on a tripod (l. 165) and uttered the supposedly inspired prophecies.

9. Taillefer, an armed and mounted minstrel, who led the charge of William's Norman horsemen at the battle of Hastings (October 14, 1066), singing the *Song of Roland*, and fell before the English forces.

*Anne haec*, one exclaims, on beholding his knocks,  
*Vestis filii tui*,<sup>1</sup> O leather-clad Fox?<sup>2</sup>

Can that be thy son, in the battle's mid din, 185  
 Preaching brotherly love and then driving it in  
 To the brain of the tough old Goliath<sup>3</sup> of sin,  
 With the smoothest of pebbles from Castaly's spring<sup>4</sup>  
 Impressed on his hard moral sense with a sling?

\* \* \*

"There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,"<sup>9</sup> 190  
 Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge,  
 Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,  
 In a way to make people of common sense damn metres,  
 Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,  
 But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind, 195  
 Who— But hey-day! What's this? Messieurs Mathews<sup>5</sup> and Poe,  
 You mustn't fling mud-balls at Longfellow so,  
 Does it make a man worse that his character's such  
 As to make his friends love him (as you think) too much?  
 Why, there is not a bard at this moment alive 200  
 More willing than he that his fellows should thrive;  
 While you are abusing him thus, even now  
 He would help either one of you out of a slough;  
 You may say that he's smooth and all that till you're hoarse,  
 But remember that elegance also is force; 205  
 After polishing granite as much as you will,  
 The heart keeps its tough old persistency still;  
 Deduct all you can, *that* still keeps you at bay;  
 Why, he'll live till men weary of Collins and Gray.<sup>6</sup>  
 I'm not over-fond of Greek metres in English,<sup>7</sup> 210  
 To me rhyme's a gain, so it be not too jinglish,  
 And your modern hexameter verses are no more  
 Like Greek ones than sleek Mr. Pope<sup>8</sup> is like Homer;  
 As the roar of the sea to the coo of a pigeon is,

1. *Anne haec* \* \* \* *Vestis filii tui*. Cf. Genesis xxxvii: 32: "Is this thy son's coat, or not," asked by Joseph's brothers of his father Jacob.

2. George Fox (1624-1691), founder of the Society of Friends, was famous for his leather breeches.

3. The Philistine giant, slain by a stone from David's slingshot. Cf. I Samuel xvii: 49.

4. A fountain on Mount Parnassus, sacred to Apollo, god of poetry and music.

9. The central character in Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) owned a raven.

5. Cornelius Mathews (1817-1889), editor, novelist, and magazine writer who, like Poe, criticized Longfellow's poetic form and subject matter.

6. William Collins (1721-1759), author of odes and elegies; Thomas Gray (1716-1771), author of "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751).

7. Referring to Longfellow's use of the hexameter in *Evangeline*.

8. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) used the heroic couplet in his translation of the *Iliad* (1715-1720), achieving the spirit more of eighteenth-century terseness than of Homeric grandeur.



So, compared to your moderns, sounds old Melesigenes;<sup>5</sup> 215  
 I may be too partial, the reason, perhaps, o't is  
 That I've heard the old blind man<sup>6</sup> recite his own rhapsodies,  
 And my ear with that music impregnate may be,  
 Like the poor exiled shell with the soul of the sea,  
 Or as one can't bear Strauss<sup>7</sup> when his nature is cloven 230  
 To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of Beethoven;<sup>8</sup>  
 But, set that aside, and 'tis truth that I speak,  
 Had Theocritus<sup>9</sup> written in English, not Greek,  
 I believe that his exquisite sense would scarce change a line  
 In that rare, tender, virgin-like pastoral Evangeline. 225  
 That's not ancient nor modern, its place is apart  
 Where time has no sway, in the realm of pure Art,  
 'Tis a shrine of retreat from Earth's hubbub and strife  
 As quiet and chaste as the author's own life.

\* \* \*

"There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb 230  
 With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,  
 He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,  
 But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,  
 The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching  
 Till he learns the distinction 'twix singing and preaching; 235  
 His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,  
 But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,  
 And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,<sup>2</sup>  
 At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem."

\* \* \*

1848

## From 'The Biglow Papers, First Series<sup>1</sup>

### No. I: A Letter

FROM MR. EZEKIEL BIGLOW OF JAALAM TO THE HON. JOSEPH T.  
 BUCKINGHAM, EDITOR OF THE BOSTON COURIER, ENCLOSING A  
 POEM OF HIS SON, MR. HOSEA BIGLOW

<sup>5</sup> *I.e.*, Melos-born, referring to Homer; his birthplace is actually uncertain.

<sup>6</sup> Homer.

<sup>7</sup> Johann Strauss (1804-1849), composer of waltzes and polkas.

<sup>8</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), composer of symphonies and concertos.

<sup>9</sup> Greek pastoral poet (third century B.C.).

<sup>2</sup> *Cf.* Genesis v: 27: "And all the days

of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years \* \* \*

1. On June 17, 1846, in the *Boston Courier*, there appeared a letter to the editor, supposedly from an up-country farmer enclosing a poem written by his son after a disturbing trip to Boston. In so unassuming and disguised a manner, Lowell began *The Biglow Papers*, unsurpassed in American literature for political and social satire, the authentic

JAYLEM, june 1846.

MISTER EDDYTER:—

Our Hosea wuz down to Boston last week, and he see a cruetin Sarjunt<sup>2</sup> a struttin round as popler as a hen with 1 chicking, with 2 fellers a drummin and ffin arter him like all nater. the sarjunt he thout Hosca hed n't gut his i teeth cut cos he looked a kindo's though he'd jest com down,<sup>3</sup> so he cal'lated to hook him in, but Hosy wood n't take none o' his sarsc<sup>4</sup> for all he hed much as 20 Rooster's tales stuck onto his hat and eenamost enuf brass a-bobbin up and down on his shoulders and figured onto his coat and trousis, let alone wut nater hed sot in his featers, to make a 6 pounder out on.

wal, Hosea he com home considerabal riled, and arter I'd gone to bed I heern Him a-thrashin round like a short-tailed Bull in flit-time. The old Woman ses she to me ses she, Zekle, ses she, our Hosce's gut the chollery or suthin anuther ses she, don't you Bec skeered, ses I, he's oncy amakin pottery<sup>5</sup> ses i, he's ollers on hand at that ere busyness like Da & martin,<sup>6</sup> and shure enuf, cum mornin, Hosy he cum down stares full chizzle,<sup>7</sup> hare on cend and cote tales flyin, and sot rite of to go reed his varses to Parson Wilbur bein he hain't ancy grate shows o' book larnin himself, bimeby he cum back and sed the parson wuz drefle tickled with 'em as i hoop you will Be, and said they wuz True grit.

Hosca ses 't ain't hardly fair to call 'em his'n now, cos the parson kind o' slicked off sum o' the last varses, but he told Hosee he did n't want to put his ore in to tetch to the Rest on 'em, bein they wuz verry well As thay wuz, and then Hosy ses he sed suthin an-

use of Yankee idiom, and the skillful blending of sincerity and broad humor. Provoked by the poet's belief that the Mexican War was a threat to domestic unity and a political maneuver to extend slave territory, the poems appeared in the Boston *Courier* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* before their publication as *The Biglow Papers* in 1848. "Edited" by the pedantic "Rev. Homer Wilbur," who blithely wrote his own press notices, affixed a scholarly title page and strewn Latin quotations through the volume, the poems indicate the New England character of Hosea Biglow—"homely common-sense vivified and heated by conscience"—and of Birdofredum Sawin, the "unmoral" foil for Hosea, not here represented.

The early years of the Civil War brought Biglow and Sawin into print again, as staunch and caustic supporters of the Union, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and in 1862 *The Biglow Papers, Second Series* was published in England. In the

introduction to the American edition of 1867, Lowell described the genesis of the *Papers*, adding a masterly defense and explanation of the Yankee dialect. The notes signed "H.W." are those of the supposititious editor, "Homer Wilbur."

2. President Polk, authorized by an act of May 13, 1846, called out fifty thousand volunteers, and in Massachusetts, as elsewhere, the recruiting sergeants used every inducement to meet their quota.

3. *I.e.*, "just come down from the country."

4. "*sarsc*: abuse, impertinence" [Lowell's note; like other definitions that follow, this is taken from the glossary of the 1848 edition].

5. "*Aut insanit, aut versos facit.*—H.W." ["Either he is mad, or he is making poetry."]

6. Makers of shoe blacking, Day and Martin advertised their product in verse.

7. *I.e.*, full of grit; determined.

uther about Simplex Mundishes<sup>8</sup> or sum sech feller, but I guess Hosca kind o' did n't hear him, for I never hearn o' nobody o' that name in this villadge, and I've lived here man and boy 76 year cum next tater diggin, and thair ain't no wheres a kitting spryer 'n I be.

If you print 'em I wish you'd jest let folks know who hosy's father is, cos my ant Keziah used to say it's nater to be curus ses she, she ain't livin though and he's a likely kind o' lad.

EZEKIEL BIGLOW.

THRASH away, you'll hev to rattle  
 On them kittle-drums o' yourn,—  
 't ain't a knowin' kind o' cattle  
 Thet is ketchd with mouldy corn;  
 Put in stiff, you fifer feller, 5  
 Let folks see how spry you be,—  
 Guess you'll toot till you are yellor  
 'fore you git ahold o' me!

Thet air flag's a leetle rotten,  
 Hope it ain't your Sunday's best; 10  
 Fact! it takes a sight o' cotton"  
 'To stuff out a soger's<sup>1</sup> chest:  
 Sence we farmers hev to pay fer 't,  
 Ef you must wear humps like these,  
 S'posin' you should try salt hay fer 't, 15  
 It would du ez slick ez grease.

'T would n't suit them Southun fellers,  
 They're a drefle graspin' set,  
 We must ollers blow the bellers  
 Wen they want their irons het; 20  
 May be it's all right ez preachin',  
 But my narves it kind o' grates,  
 Wen I see the overreachin'  
 O' them nigger-drivin' States.

Them thet rule us, them slave-traders, 25  
 Hain't they cut a thunderin' swarth  
 (Helped by Yankee renegaders),  
 Thru the vartu o' the North!  
 We begin to think it's nater  
 'To take sarse an' not be riled;— 30

8. Hosea's misunderstanding of the parson's criticism: *simplex mundis*, "simpleton of the world."

9. A reference to the staple of southern

economy.

1. "*sogerin*", soldiering: a barbarous amusement common among men in the savage state." [Lowell's note.]

Who 'd expect to see a tater  
All on eend at bein' biled?

Ez fer war, I call it murder,—  
There you hev it plain an' flat;  
I don't want to go no funder 35  
Than my Testyment fer that;  
God hez sed so plump an' fairly,  
It's ez long ez it is broad,  
An' you've gut to git up airly  
Ef you want to take in God. 40

'T ain't your eppyletts an' feathers  
Make the thing a grain more right;  
't ain't afollerin' your bell-wethers<sup>2</sup>  
Will excuse ye in His sight;  
Ef you take a sword an' dror it, 45  
An' go stick a feller thru,  
Guv'ment ain't to answer for it,  
God'll send the bill to you.

Wut's the use o' meetin'-goin'  
Every Sabbath, wet or dry, 50  
Ef it's right to go amowin'  
Feller-men like oats an' rye?  
I dunno but wut it's pooty  
Trainin' round in bobtail coats,—  
But it's curus Christian dooty 55  
This 'cre cuttin' folk's throats.

They may talk o' Freedom's airy<sup>3</sup>  
Tell they're pupple in the face,—  
It's a grand gret cemetary  
I'er the barthrights of our race; 60  
They jest want this Californy  
So's to lug new slave-states in<sup>4</sup>  
To abuse ye, an' to scorn ye,  
An' to plunder ye like sin.

Ain't it cute to see a Yankee 65  
Take sech everlastin' pains,  
All to git the Devil's thankec  
Helpin' on 'em weld their chains?  
Wy, it's jest cz clear cz figgers,  
Clear ez one an' one make two, 70

2. The male sheep with a bell on his neck, leading the flock.

3. "airy: area" [Lowell's note].

4. The Compromise of 1850 settled the doubt as to California's status by admitting her as a free state.

Chaps thet make black slaves o' niggers  
Want to make wite slaves o' you.

Tell ye jest the cend I've come to  
Arter cipherin' plaguy smart,  
An' it makes a handy sum, tu, 75  
Any gump<sup>5</sup> could larn by heart;  
Laborin' man an' laborin' woman  
Hev one glory an' one shame.  
Ev'ythin' thet's done inhuman  
Injers all on 'em the same. 80

'T aint by turnin' out to hack folks  
You're agoin' to git your right,  
Nor by lookin' down on black folks  
Coz you're put upon by wite;  
Slavery ain't o' nary color, 85  
't ain't the hide thet makes it wus;  
All it keers fer in a feller  
's jest to make him fill its pus.<sup>6</sup>

Want to tackle *me* in, du ye?  
I expect you'll hev to wait; 90  
Wen cold lead puts daylight thru ye  
You'll begin to kal'late;<sup>7</sup>  
S'pose the crows wun't fall to pickin'  
All the carkiss from your bones,  
Coz you helped to give a lickin' 95  
To them poor half-Spanish drones?

Jest go home an' ask our Nancy  
Wether I'd be sech a goose  
Ez to jine ye,—guess you'd fancy  
The ctarnal bung wuz loose! 100  
She wants me fer home consumption,  
Let alone the hay's to mow,—  
Ef you're arter folks o' gumption,  
You've a darned long row to hoe.

Take them editors thet's crowin' 105  
Like a cockerel three months old,—  
Don't ketch any on 'cm going',  
Though they *be* so blasted bold;  
*Ain't* they a prime lot o' fellers?  
'Fore they think on 't guess they'll sprout 110

5. "*gump*: a foolish fellow, a dullard"  
[Lowell's note].

6. "*pus*: purse" [Lowell's note].  
7. Calculate; *i.e.*, consider.

(Like a peach thet's got the yellors),<sup>8</sup>  
 With the meanness bustin' out.

Wal, go 'long to help 'em stealin'  
 Bigger pens to cram with slaves,  
 Help the men thet's ollers dealin' 115  
 Insults on your fathers' graves;  
 Help the strong to grind the feeble,  
 Help the many agin' the few,  
 Help the men thet call your people  
 Witewashed slaves an' peddlin' crew! 120

Massachusetts, God forgive her,  
 She's akneelin' with the rest,<sup>9</sup>  
 She, thet ough' to ha' clung ferever  
 In her grand old eagle-nest;  
 She thet ough' to stand so fearless 125  
 While the wracks are round her hurled,  
 Holdin' up a beacon peerless  
 To the oppressed of all the world!

Hain't they sold your colored scamen?  
 Hain't they made your env'ys w'iz?<sup>1</sup> 130  
 Wut'll make ye act like freemen?  
 Wut'll git your dander riz?  
 Come, I'll tell ye wut I'm thinkin'  
 Is our dooty in this fix,  
 They'd ha' done 't ez quick ez winkin' 135  
 In the days o' seventy-six.

Clang the bells in every steeple,  
 Call all true men to disown  
 The tradooocers of our people,  
 The enslavers o' their own; 140  
 Let our dear old Bay State proudly  
 Put the trumpet to her mouth,  
 Let her ring this messidge loudly  
 In the ears of all the South:—

"I'll return ye good fer evil 145  
 Much ez we frail mortils can,  
 But I wun't go help the Devil

8. A disease of peach trees resulting in no fruit.

9. The seven representatives from Massachusetts had voted for the bill recognizing a state of war with Mexico on May 11, 1846, and allocating funds for military use.

1. Samuel Hoar and George Hubbard had been sent south to protest the capture and sale of free colored citizens of Massachusetts; as "env'ys," or envoys, they had been made to "w'iz" (whiz). *i.e.*, to leave the South.

Makin' man the cus o' man;  
 Call me coward, call me traitor,  
 Jest ez suits your mean idees,— 150  
 Here I stand a tyrant-hater,  
 An' the friend o' God an' Peace!"

Ef I'd my way I hed ruther  
 We should go to work an' part,  
 'They take one way, we take t'other, 155  
 Guess it would n't break my heart;  
 Man hed ough' to put asunder  
 'Them thet God has noways jined;  
 An' I should n't gretly wonder  
 Ef there's thousands o' my mind. 160

\* \* \*

## From The Biglow Papers, Second Series

### From the Introduction

#### THE COURTIN'<sup>9</sup>

God makes sech nights, all white an' still  
 Fur'z you can look or listen,  
 Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,  
 All silence an' all glisten.

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown 5  
 An' pecked in thru' the winder,  
 An' there sot Huldry all alone,  
 'ith no one nigh to hender.

A fireplace filled the room's one side  
 With half a cord o' wood in— 10

9. Originally a poem of only forty-four lines in *The Biglow Papers, First Series* (1848), it was extended as Lowell here explains in the introduction to the *Second Series* (1867): "The only attempt I had ever made at anything like a pastoral (if that may be called an attempt which was the result almost of pure accident) was in 'The Courtin'.' While the Introduction to the First Series was going through the press, I received word from the printer that there was a blank page left which must be filled. I sat down at once and improvised another fictitious 'notice of the press,' in which, because verse would fill up space more cheaply than prose, I inserted an extract from a supposed ballad of Mr. Biglow. I kept no copy of

it, and the printer, as directed, cut it off when the gap was filled. Presently I began to receive letters asking for the rest of it, sometimes for the *balance* of it. I had none, but to answer such demands, I patched a conclusion upon it in a later edition. Those who had only the first continued to importune me. Afterward, being asked to write it out as an autograph for the Baltimore Sanitary Commission Fair, I added other verses, into some of which I infused a little more sentiment in a homely way, and after a fashion completed it by sketching in the characters and making a connected story. Most likely I have spoiled it, but I shall put it at the end of this Introduction, to answer once for all those kindly importunings."

There warn't no stoves (tell comfort died)  
To bake ye to a puddin'.

The wa'nut logs shot sparkles out  
Towards the pootiest, bless her,  
An' lectle flames danced all about 15  
The chiny on the dresser.

Agin the chimbley crook-necks' hung,  
An' in amongst 'em rusted  
The ole queen's-arm<sup>2</sup> thet gran'ther Young  
Fetched back f'om Concord busted. 20

The very room, coz she was in,  
Seemed warm f'om floor to ceilin',  
An' she looked full ez rosy agin  
Ez the apples she was peelin'.

'Twas kin' o' kingdom-come to look 25  
On sech a blessed cretur,  
A dogrose blushin' to a brook  
Ain't modester nor sweeter.

He was six foot o' man, A 1,  
Clear grit an' human natur'. 30  
None couldn't quicker pitch a ton  
Nor dror a furrer straighter.

He'd sparked it with full twenty gals,  
He'd squired 'em, danced 'em, druv 'em,  
Fust this one, an' then thet, by spells— 35  
All is, he couldn't love 'em.

But long o' her his veins 'ould run  
All crinkly like curled maple,  
The side she breshed felt full o' sun  
Ez a south slope in Ap'il. 40

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing  
Ez hisn in the choir;  
My! when he made Ole Hunderd<sup>3</sup> ring,  
She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

An' she'd blush scarlit, right in prayer, 45  
When her new meetin'-bunnet  
Felt somchow thru' its crown a pair  
O' blue eyes sot upun it.

1. Gourds.

2. Revolutionary musket.

3. A psalm tune named from its use  
with the One Hundredth Psalm.



Thet night, I tell ye, she looked *some!*  
 She seemed to 've gut a new soul,  
 For she felt sartin-sure he'd come,  
 Down to her very shoe-sole. 50

She heered a foot, an' knowed it tu,  
 A-raspin' on the scraper,—  
 All ways to once her feelin's flew  
 Like sparks in burnt-up paper. 55

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,  
 Some doubtfe o' the sekle,<sup>4</sup>  
 His heart kep' goin' pity-pat,  
 But hern went pity Zekle. 60

An' yit she gin her cheer a jerk  
 Ez though she wished him funder,  
 An' on her apples kep' to work,  
 Parin' away like murder.

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"  
 "Wal . . . no . . . I come dasignin' "—  
 "To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es  
 Agin to-morrer's i'nin'." 65

To say why gals acts so or so,  
 Or don't, 'ould be persumin';  
 Mcbby to mean *yes* an' say *no*  
 Comes nateral to women. 70

He stood a spell on one foot fust,  
 'Then stood a spell on t'other,  
 An' on which one he felt the wust  
 He couldn't ha' told ye nuther. 75

Says he, "I'd better call agin!"  
 Says she, "Think likely, Mister:"  
 Thet last word pricked him like a pin,  
 An' . . . Wal, he up an' kist her. 80

When Ma bineby upon 'em slips,  
 Huld' sot pale cz ashes,  
 All kin' o' smily roun' the lips  
 An' teary roun' the lashes.

For she was jes' the quiet kind  
 Whose naturs never vary, 85

Like streams that keep a summer mind  
Snowhid in Jenooary.

The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued  
Too tight for all expressin',  
Tell mother see how metters stood,  
An' gin 'em both her blessin'.

90

Then her red come back like the tide  
Down to the Bay o' Fundy,  
An' all I know is they was cried  
In meetin's come nex' Sunday.

95

From No. II: *Mason and Slidell: A Yankee Idyll*<sup>5</sup>

JONATHAN TO JOHN

It don't seem hardly right, John  
When both my hands was full,  
To stump me to a fight, John,—  
Your cousin, tu, John Bull!  
Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
We know it now," sez he,  
"The lion's paw is all the law,  
Accordin' to J. B.,  
Thet's fit for you an' me!"

5

You wonder why we're hot, John?  
Your mark wuz on the guns,  
The neutral guns, thet shot, John,  
Our brothers an' our sons:

10

Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
There's human blood," sez he,  
"By fits an' starts, in Yankée hearts,

15

5. The wedding banns were "cried" or announced in church.

6. The *Trent* affair, the occasion of the first threat of European intervention in the Civil War, involved two Confederate agents, James M. Mason and John Slidell, who were forcibly removed from the British ship *Trent* on November 8, 1861, by Charles Wilkes, Union captain of the U.S.S. *San Jacinto*, to prevent them from accomplishing their diplomatic mission to London. Only the efforts of English and Union statesmen kept the furor in the press from erupting into a declaration of war over this breach of international neutrality. President Lincoln was persuaded to release the prisoners, who were sent on

to their destination. The event actually served to strengthen English determination to remain neutral.

In his letter to the editors of the *Atlantic Monthly*, where the poem first appeared in February, 1862, Homer Wilbur sets forth the American distress over the affair, followed by a poem of Hosea's in the form of an allegory between Concord Bridge (representing anger at England) and the Bunker Hill Monument (representing conciliation toward England), and then concludes with "Jonathan to John" (America to England), given here. The entire work was first separately reprinted in Boston (1862), and was included in *The Lowell Papers, Second Series* (1867).

Though 't may surprise J. B.  
More'n it would you an' me."

Ef I turned mad dogs loose, John,  
On *your* front-parlor stairs, 20  
Would it jest meet your views, John,  
To wait an' sue their heirs?  
Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
I on'y guess," sez he,  
"Thet ef Vattel' on *his* tocs fell, 25  
"T would kind o' rile J. B.,  
Ez wal ez you an' me!"

Who made the law thet hurts, John,  
*Heads I win,—ditto tails?*  
"J. B." was on his shirts, John, 30  
Onless my memory fails.  
Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
(I'm good at thet)," sez he,  
"Thet sauce for goose ain't *jest* the juice  
I'or ganders with J. B., 35  
No more 'n with you or me!"

When your rights was our wrongs, John,  
You did n't stop for fuss,—  
Britanny's trident prongs, John,  
Was good 'nough law for us.\* 40  
Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
Though physic's good," sez he,  
"It docsn't foller thet he can swaller  
Prescriptions signed 'J. B.,'  
Put up by you an' me!" 45

We own the ocean, tu, John:  
You mus' n' take it hard,  
Ef we can't think with you, John,  
It's jest your own back-yard.  
Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess, 50  
Ef *thet* 's his claim," sez he,  
"The fencin'-stuff'll cost enough

7. Emmerich von Vattel (1714–1767), Swiss jurist, whose *Droit des Gens* \* \* \* (1758) argued that natural law was above legislation, providing a justification for liberal revolution.

8. A reference to the incident of the British seizure of the American *Caroline* in the Canadian insurrection of 1837. The American ship, in defiance of

President Van Buren's insistence on neutrality, was used to convey armed American sympathizers across the Niagara River; English forces fired the ship in American waters, but five years later, in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842), Britain made amends for the incident. The "trident prongs" here denote British naval law.

To bust up friend J. B.,  
Ez wal ez you an' me!"

Why talk so dreffle big, John, 55  
Of honor when it meant

You didn't care a fig, John,  
But jest for *ten per cent*?<sup>9</sup>  
Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
He's like the rest," sez he: 60

"When all is done, it's number one  
Thet's nearest to J. B.,  
Ez wal ez t' you an' me!"

We give the critters back, John,  
Cos Abram thought 't was right;<sup>1</sup> 65  
It warn't your bullyin' clack, John,  
Provokin' us to fight.

Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
We've a hard row," sez he,  
"To hoc jest now; but thet, somehow, 70  
May happen to J. B.,  
Ez wal ez you an' me!"

We ain't so weak an' poor. John,  
With twenty million people,  
An' close to every door, John, 75  
A school-house an' a steeple.

Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
It is a fact," sez he,  
"The surest plan to make a Man  
Is, think him so, J. B., 80  
Ez much ez you or me!"

Our folks believe in Law, John;  
An' it's for her sake, now,  
They've left the axe an' saw, John,  
The anvil an' the plough. 85

Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
Ef 't warn't for law," sez he,  
"There 'd be one shindy from here to Indy;  
An' thet don't suit J. B.  
(When 't ain't 'twix you an' me!)" 90

We know we've got a cause, John,  
Thet's honest, just, an' true;  
We thought 't would win applause, John,

<sup>9</sup> *I.e.*, the presumed English profit from selling war materiel to the South. <sup>1</sup> The "critters" are Mason and Sli-

dell; "Abram" is Abraham Lincoln.

Ef nowhere's else, from you.  
 Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
 His love of right," sez he, 95  
 "Hangs by a rotten fibre o' cotton:  
 There's natur' in J. B.,  
 Ez wal 'z you an' me!"

The South says, "*Poor folks down!*" John,  
 An' "*All men up!*" say we,— 100  
 White, yaller, black, an' brown, John:  
 Now which is your idee?  
 Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
 John preaches wal," sez he; 105  
 "But, sermon thru, an' come to *du*,  
 Why, there's the old J. B.  
 A crowdin' you an' me!"

Shall it be love, or hate, John?  
 It's you thet's to decide; 110  
 Ain't *your* bonds held by fate, John,  
 Like all the world's beside?  
 Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess  
 Wise men forgive," sez he,  
 "But not forgit; an' some time yit 115  
 Thet truth may strike J. B.,  
 Ez wal ez you an' me!"

God means to make this land, John,  
 Clear thru, from sea to sea,  
 Believe and understand, John, 120  
 'The *wuth* o' bein' free.  
 Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
 God's price is high," sez he;  
 "But nothin' else than wut He sells  
 Wears long, an thet J. B. 125  
 May larn, like you an' me!"

1867

## Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration<sup>2</sup>

JULY 21, 1865

### I

Weak-winged is song,  
 Nor aims at that clear-ethered height

2. Lowell read this poem to a group of friends and alumni of Harvard College on July 21, 1865, to honor the Harvard men, living and dead, who had fought

Whither the brave deed climbs for light:

We seem to do them wrong,  
 Bringing our robin's-leaf to deck their hearse 5  
 Who in warm life-blood wrote their nobler verse,  
 Our trivial song to honor those who come  
 With ears attuned to strenuous trump and drum,  
 And shaped in squadron-strophes their desire,  
 Live battle-odes whose lines were steel and fire: 10

Yet sometimes feathered words are strong,  
 A gracious memory to buoy up and save  
 From Lethe's<sup>3</sup> dreamless ooze, the common grave  
 Of the unventurous throng.

## II

Today our Reverend Mother<sup>4</sup> welcomes back 15  
 Her wisest Scholars, those who understood  
 The deeper teaching of her mystic tome,  
 And offered their fresh lives to make it good:

No lore of Greece or Rome,  
 No science peddling with the names of things, 20  
 Or reading stars to find inglorious fates,  
 Can lift our life with wings  
 Far from Death's idle gulf that for the many waits,  
 And lengthen out our dates

With that clear fame whose memory sings 25  
 In many hearts to come, and nerves them and dilates:  
 Nor such thy teaching, Mother of us all!

Not such the trumpet-call  
 Of thy diviner mood,  
 That could thy sons entice 30

From happy homes and toils, the fruitful nest  
 Of those half-virtues which the world calls best,  
 Into War's tumult rude;

in the recently concluded Civil War. Three of his nephews had died in the conflict, and his personal involvement had been intensified by his hatred of war, evident in *The Biglow Papers*, *First Series*, and his resentment of slavery, reflected in the *Second Series*. In this poem he finds some consolation in the sober joy of peace and victory: "O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!" He wrote to a friend: "The poem was written with a vehement speed, which I thought I had lost in the skirts of my professor's gown. Till within two days of the celebration I was hopelessly dumb, and then it all came with a rush, literally making me lean \* \* \* and so nervous that I was weeks in getting over it." The form of

the poem, which is a so-called Cowleyan ode, was chosen by the poet because of the suitability of the varied verse structure for reading aloud. The sixth strophe, on Lincoln, not in the original reading, was added immediately afterward. Privately printed at Cambridge in 1865, the poem appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for September, 1865, and was reprinted in *Harvard Memorial Biographies* (1866), *Under the Willows* (1869), and *Three Memorial Poems* (1877).

3. A river of Hades whose waters when drunk provided forgetfulness of the past life.

4. I.e., Harvard College, their Alma Mater.

But rather far that stern device  
 The sponsors chose that round thy cradle stood 35  
 In the dim, unventured wood,  
 The VERITAS<sup>5</sup> that lurks beneath  
 The letter's unprolific sheath,  
 Life of whate'er makes life worth living,  
 Seed-grain of high emprise, immortal food, 40  
 One heavenly thing whereof earth hath the giving.

III

Many loved Truth, and lavished life's best oil  
 Amid the dust of books to find her,  
 Content at last, for guerdon of their toil,  
 With the cast mantle she hath left behind her. 45  
 Many in sad faith sought for her,  
 Many with crossed hands sighed for her;  
 But these, our brothers, fought for her,  
 At life's dear peril wrought for her,  
 So loved her that they died for her, 50  
 Tasting the raptured fleetness  
 Of her divine completeness:  
 Their higher instinct knew  
 Those love her best who to themselves are true,  
 And what they dare to dream of, dare to do; 55  
 They followed her and found her  
 Where all may hope to find,  
 Not in the ashes of the burnt-out mind,  
 But beautiful, with danger's sweetness round her.  
 Where faith made whole with deed 60  
 Breathes its awakening breath  
 Into the lifeless creed,  
 They saw her plumed and mailed,  
 With sweet, stern face unveiled,  
 And all-repaying eyes, look proud on them in death. 65

IV

Our slender life runs rippling by, and glides  
 Into the silent hollow of the past;  
 What is there that abides  
 To make the next age better for the last?  
 Is earth too poor to give us 70  
 Something to live for here that shall outlive us?  
 Some more substantial boon  
 Than such as flows and ebbs with Fortune's fickle moon?  
 The little that we see  
 From doubt is never free; 75

5. "Veritas" ("Truth") on the seal of Harvard College.

The little that we do  
 Is but half-nobly true;  
 With our laborious hiving  
 What men call treasure, and the gods call dross,  
 Life seems a jest of Fate's contriving, 80  
 Only secure in every one's conniving,  
 A long account of nothings paid with loss,  
 Where we poor puppets, jerked by unseen wires,  
 After our little hour of strut and rave,  
 With all our pasteboard passions and desires, 85  
 Loves, hates, ambitions, and immortal fires,  
 Are tossed pell-mell together in the grave.  
 But stay! no age was e'er degenerate,  
 Unless men held it at too cheap a rate,  
 For in our likeness still we shape our fate. 90  
 Ah, there is something here  
 Unfathomed by the cynic's sneer,  
 Something that gives our feeble light  
 A high immunity from Night,  
 Something that leaps life's narrow bars 95  
 To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven;  
 A seed of sunshine that can leaven  
 Our earthly dullness with the beams of stars,  
 And glorify our clay  
 With light from fountains elder than the Day; 100  
 A conscience more divine than we,  
 A gladness fed with secret tears,  
 A vexing, forward-reaching sense  
 Of some more noble permanence;  
 A light across the sea, 105  
 Which haunts the soul and will not let it be,  
 Still beaconing from the heights of undegenerate years.

## v

Whither leads the path  
 To ampler fates that leads?  
 Not down through flowery meads, 110  
 To reap an aftermath  
 Of youth's vainglorious weeds,  
 But up the steep, amid the wrath  
 And shock of deadly-hostile creeds,  
 Where the world's best hope and stay 115  
 By battle's flashes gropes a desperate way,  
 And every turf the fierce foot clings to bleeds.  
 Peace hath her not ignoble wreath,  
 Ere yet the sharp, decisive word



Light the black lips of cannon, and the sword 120  
 Dreams in its caseful sheath;  
 But some day the live coal behind the thought,  
 Whether from Baäl's stone<sup>6</sup> obscene,  
 Or from the shrine serene  
 Of God's pure altar brought, 125  
 Bursts up in flame; the war of tongue and pen  
 Learns with what deadly purpose it was fraught,  
 And, helpless in the fiery passion caught,  
 Shakes all the pillared state with shock of men:  
 Some day the soft Ideal that we wooed 130  
 Confronts us fiercely, foe-beset, pursued,  
 And cries reproachful: "Was it, then, my praise,  
 And not myself was loved? Prove now thy truth;  
 I claim of thee the promise of thy youth;  
 Give me thy life, or cower in empty phrase, 135  
 The victim of thy genius, not its mate!"  
 Life may be given in many ways,  
 And loyalty to Truth be sealed  
 As bravely in the closet as the field,  
 So bountiful is Fate; 140  
 But then to stand beside her,  
 When craven churls deride her,  
 To front a lie in arms and not to yield,  
 This shows, methinks, God's plan  
 And measure of a stalwart man, 145  
 Limbed like the old heroic breeds,  
 Who stands self-poised on manhood's solid earth,  
 Not forced to frame excuses for his birth,  
 Fed from within with all the strength he needs.

VI

Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,<sup>7</sup> 150  
 Whom late the Nation he had led,  
 With ashes on her head,  
 Wept with the passion of an angry grief:  
 Forgive me, if from present things I turn  
 To speak what in my heart will beat and burn, 155  
 And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.  
 Nature, they say, doth dote,  
 And cannot make a man  
 Save on some worn-out plan,  
 Repeating us by rote: 160  
 For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,

6. Cf. I Kings xviii for the contest between Elijah and the idolatrous priests

of the pagan deity Baäl.  
 7. Lincoln.

And choosing sweet clay from the breast  
 Of the unexhausted West,  
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,  
 Wise, steadfast,, in the strength of God, and true. 165  
 How beautiful to see  
 Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,  
 Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;  
 One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,  
 Not lured by any cheat of birth, 170  
 But by his clear-grained human worth,  
 And brave old wisdom of sincerity!  
 They knew that outward grace is dust;  
 They could not choose but trust  
 In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill, 175  
 And supple-tempered will  
 That bent like perfect steel to spring again and thrust.  
 His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,  
 Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,  
 A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind; 180  
 Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,  
 Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,  
 Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.  
 Nothing of Europe here,  
 Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward still, 185  
 Ere any names of Serf and Peer  
 Could Nature's equal scheme deface  
 And thwart her genial will;  
 Here was a type of the true elder race,  
 And one of Plutarch's men<sup>8</sup> talked with us face to face. 190  
 I praise him not; it were too late;  
 And some innative weakness there must be  
 In him who condescends to victory  
 Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,  
 Safe in himself as in a fate. 195  
 So always firmly he:  
 He knew to bide his time,  
 And can his fame abide,  
 Still patient in his simple faith sublime,  
 Till the wise years decide. 200  
 Great captains, with their guns and drums,  
 Disturb our judgment for the hour,  
 But at last silence comes;  
 These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,

8. Lowell compares Lincoln to one of the heroes of ancient history memorialized by Plutarch (46?-120) in his *Parallel Lives*.

Our children shall behold his fame.

205

The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,  
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,  
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

VII

Long as man's hope insatiate can discern

Or only guess some more inspiring goal

210

Outside of Self, enduring as the pole,  
Along whose course the flying axles burn  
Of spirits bravely-pitched, earth's manlier brood;

Long as below we cannot find

The meed that stills the inexorable mind;

215

So long this faith to some ideal Good,  
Under whatever mortal names it masks,  
Freedom, Law, Country, this ethereal mood

That thanks the Fates for their severer tasks,

Feeling its challenged pulses leap,

220

While others skulk in subterfuges cheap,

And, set in Danger's van, has all the boon it asks,

Shall win man's praise and woman's love,

Shall be a wisdom that we set above

All other skills and gifts to culture dear,

225

A virtue round whose forehead we inwreath

Laurels that with a living passion breathe

When other crowns grow, while we twine them, sear.

What brings us thronging these high rites to pay,

And seal these hours the noblest of our year,

230

Save that our brothers found this better way?

VIII

We sit here in the Promised Land

That flows with Freedom's honey and milk;<sup>9</sup>

But 'twas they won it, sword in hand,

Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk.

235

We welcome back our bravest and our best;—

Ah me! not all! some come not with the rest,

Who went forth brave and bright as any here!

I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,

But the sad strings complain,

240

And will not please the ear:

I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane

Again and yet again

Into a dirge, and die away, in pain.

In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,

245

Thinking of dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,

9. Cf. Exodus iii: 8.

Dark to the triumph which they died to gain:

Fitlier may others greet the living,

For me the past is unforgiving;

I with uncovered head

250

Salute the sacred dead,

Who went, and who return not.—Say not so!

'Tis not the grapes of Canaan<sup>1</sup> that repay,

But the high faith that failed not by the way;

Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;

255

No ban of endless night exiles the brave;

And to the saner mind

We rather seem the dead that stayed behind.

Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!

For never shall their aureoled presence lack:

260

I see them muster in a gleaming row,

With ever-youthful brows that nobler show;

We find in our dull road their shining track;

In every nobler mood

We feel the orient of their spirit glow,

265

Part of our life's unalterable good,

Of all our saintlier aspiration;

They come transfigured back,

Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,

Beautiful evermore, and with the rays

270

Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation!

IX

But is there hope to save

Even this ethereal essence from the grave?

What ever 'scaped Oblivion's subtle wrong

Save a few clarion names, or golden threads of song?

275

Before my musing eye

The mighty ones of old sweep by,

Disvoicèd now and insubstantial things,

As noisy once as we; poor ghosts of kings,

Shadows of empire wholly gone to dust,

280

And many races, nameless long ago,

To darkness driven by that imperious gust

Of ever-rushing Time that here doth blow:

O visionary world, condition strange,

Where naught abiding is but only Change,

285

Where the deep-bolted stars themselves still shift and range!

Shall we to more continuance make pretence?

Renown builds tombs; a life-estate is Wit;

And, bit by bit,

The cunning years steal all from us but woe;

290

1. *Cf.* Numbers xiii: 23–27.

Leaves are we, whose decays no harvest sow.

But, when we vanish hence,  
Shall they lie forceless in the dark below,  
Save to make green their little length of sods,  
Or deepen pansies for a year or two,  
Who now to us are shining-sweet as gods?  
Was dying all they had the skill to do?

295

That were not fruitless: but the Soul resents  
Such short-lived service, as if blind events  
Ruled without her, or earth could so endure;  
She claims a more divine investiture  
Of longer tenure than Fame's airy rents;  
Whate'er she touches doth her nature share;  
Her inspiration haunts the ennobled air,

300

Gives eyes to mountains blind,  
Ears to the deaf earth, voices to the wind,  
And her clear trump sings succor everywhere  
By lonely bivouacs to the wakeful mind;  
For soul inherits all that soul could dare:

305

Yea, Manhood hath a wider span  
And larger privilege of life than man.  
The single deed, the private sacrifice,  
So radiant now through proudly-hidden tears,  
Is covered up ere long from mortal eyes  
With thoughtless drift of the deciduous years;  
But that high privilege that makes all men peers,  
That leap of heart whereby a people rise

310

Up to a noble anger's height,  
And, flamed on by the Fates, not shrink, but grow more bright,  
That swift validity in noble veins,  
Of choosing danger and disdaining shame,  
Of being set on flame

320

By the pure fire that flies all contact base  
But wraps its chosen with angelic might,

These are imperishable gains,  
Sure as the sun, medicinal as light,  
These hold great futures in their lusty reins  
And certify to earth a new imperial race.

325

x

Who now shall sneer?  
Who dare again to say we trace  
Our lines to a plebeian race?

330

Roundhead and Cavalier!<sup>2</sup>

2. Roundheads were Puritan followers of Cromwell in the English civil war, founders of Massachusetts; and Cava-

liers were supporters of Charles I, representative of the early settlers of Virginia.

Dumb are those names crewhile in battle loud;  
 Dream-footed as the shadow of a cloud,

They flit across the ear: 335

That is best blood that hath most iron in 't,  
 To edge resolve with, pouring without stint

For what makes manhood dear.

Tell us not of Plantagenets,  
 Hapsburgs, and Guelfs,<sup>3</sup> whose thin bloods crawl 340  
 Down from some victor in a border-brawl!

How poor their outworn coronets,  
 Matched with one leaf of that plain civic wreath  
 Our brave for honor's blazon shall bequeath,

Through whose desert a rescued Nation sets 345

Her heel on treason, and the trumpet hears

Shout victory, tingling Europe's sullen ears

With vain resentments and more vain regrets!

# XI

Not in anger, not in pride, 350

Pure from passion's mixture rude

Ever to base earth allied,

But with far-heard gratitude,

Still with heart and voice renewed,

To heroes living and dear martyrs dead,

The strain should close that consecrates our brave. 355

Lift the heart and lift the head!

Lofty be its mood and grave,

Not without a martial ring,

Not without a prouder tread

And a peal of exultation: 360

Little right has he to sing

Through whose heart in such an hour

Beats no march of conscious power,

Sweeps no tumult of elation!

'Tis no Man we celebrate, 365

By his country's victories great,

A hero half, and half the whim of Fate,

But the pith and marrow of a Nation

Drawing force from all her men,

Highest, humblest, weakest, all, 370

For her time of need, and then

Pulsing it again through them,

3. Plantagenets, the ruling house of England (1154-1399); Hapsburgs, the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire from the middle of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries; Guelfs, the papal

party in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; all here symbols of the intrigue and the disastrous wars that left Europe in political chaos.

Till the basest can no longer cower,  
 Feeling his soul spring up divinely tall,  
 Touched but in passing by her mantle-hem. 375  
 Come back, then, noble pride, for 'tis her dower!  
 How could poet ever tower,  
 If his passions, hopes, and fears,  
 If his triumphs and his tears,  
 Kept not measure with his people? 380  
 Boom, cannon, boom to all the winds and waves!  
 Clash out, glad bells, from every rocking steeple!  
 Banners, advance with triumph, bend your staves!  
 And from every mountain-peak  
 Let beacon-fire to answering beacon speak, 385  
 Katahdin tell Monadnock, Whiteface<sup>4</sup> he,  
 And so leap on in light from sea to sea,  
 'Till the glad news be sent  
 Across a kindling continent,  
 Making earth feel more firm and air breathe braver: 390  
 "Be proud! for she is saved, and all have helped to save her!  
 She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,  
 She of the open soul and open door,  
 With room about her hearth for all mankind!  
 The fire is dreadful in her eyes no more; 395  
 From her bold front the helm she doth unbind,  
 Sends all her handmaid armies back to spin,  
 And bids her navies, that so lately hurled  
 Their crashing battle, hold their thunders in,  
 Swimming like birds of calm along the unharmed shore. 400  
 No challenge sends she to the elder world,  
 That looked askance and hated;<sup>5</sup> a light scorn  
 Plays o'er her mouth, as round her mighty knees  
 She calls her children back, and waits the morn  
 Of nobler day, enthroned between her subject seas." 405

XII

Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release!  
 Thy God, in these distempered days,  
 Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of His ways,  
 And through thine enemies hath wrought thy peace!  
 Bow down in prayer and praise! 410  
 No poorest in thy borders but may now  
 Lift to the juster skies a man's enfranchised brow.  
 O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!

4. Mountains in Maine, New Hampshire, and New York.

5. A reference to the unpopularity of the Union cause in some circles in England and France.

Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair  
 O'er such sweet brows as never other wore, 415  
 And letting thy set lips,  
 Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,  
 The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,  
 What words divine of lover or of poet  
 Could tell our love and make thee know it, 420  
 Among the Nations bright beyond compare?  
 What were our lives without thee?  
 What all our lives to save thee?  
 We reckon not what we gave thee;  
 We will not dare to doubt thee, 425  
 But ask whatever else, and we will dare!

1865 1865

## HENRY TIMROD

(1828–1867)

Henry Timrod's enduring value for today's reader rests upon a small sheaf of poems written during the Civil War. However, among southern poets before the war, Poe alone surpassed Timrod in power, emotional clarity, and craftsmanship. The war matured Timrod and gave him his most compelling subject, but its rigors also hastened his death at the age of not quite thirty-nine.

Charleston, South Carolina, where Timrod was born in 1828, was then a southern literary capital, but its other poets, best represented by William Gilmore Simms and Paul Hamilton Hayne, were somewhat pallid and sentimental regionalists. Timrod, like these, was devoted to South Carolina and to his city, whose scenes and life gave substance to his poems, yet his loyalties were large, and he opposed secession until the war was inevitable. Humanist and humanitarian, he wrote in the

perspective of a long tradition that incorporated both his beloved Latin classics and the work of such contemporaries as James Russell Lowell, with whose poems of the war his own may be justly compared. As Professor Hubbell has suggested (*The Last Years of Henry Timrod*), the range of his poetry during the few years of his life is such that, had he lived beyond the war, he might have been remembered as something more than the "Laureate of the Confederacy."

Unlike Paul Hamilton Hayne, his schoolmate and lifelong friend, Timrod was not born into the patrician tradition that flourished in Charleston. He was the grandson of an immigrant German tailor; and his father was a bookbinder and bookseller who won fleeting attention for his poetry before his death when Henry was only ten. The boy attended an excellent private



school and spent a year at the University of Georgia. The first serious breakdown of his health, together with financial difficulties, terminated his university life, although he continued for years to cherish the hope of becoming a college professor, in preparation for which he studied the classics, a labor of love, and read widely in general literature. Meanwhile, in somewhat better health, he read for the law in the office of a distinguished Charleston attorney, and then became a family tutor at three great plantations successively before entering journalism at the age of thirty.

His poems had been appearing sporadically in southern magazines since 1848, when he began sending verses to the *Southern Literary Messenger*. When Hayne became editor of the new *Russell's Magazine* in 1857, Timrod was an accepted member of the Charleston coterie that supported it. In 1860 his *Poems*, the only volume that he published, appeared in Boston. As compared with his poems of the next six years, these seem, as a whole, frail and immature. For a few months in 1861-1862 he served in the Confederate army, but he was discharged because of ill-health. For the same reason he had to relinquish his assignment as war correspondent for the *Charleston Mercury*.

In 1864, when southern journalism was already ruined by the war, he married the "Katie" of his poems, having recently be-

come editor of the *Columbia South Carolinian*, for a pittance. When Sherman's army, at the conclusion of the war, marched "from Atlanta to the sea," sacking and burning Columbia on February 17, 1865, Timrod was ruined. A sister, his brother-in-law, and his infant son had all died within two years, when, early in 1866, answering an inquiry of Hayne about his condition, he replied, "I can embody it all in a few words: *beggary, starvation, death, bitter grief, utter want of hope!*" Eighteen months later, on October 6, 1867, he died of tuberculosis and perhaps lack of proper food and care. His war poems, however, were still alive in southern memory, and not unknown in the North, when Hayne edited the first collection of Timrod's poems in 1873.

Timrod published only one volume, his *Poems*, 1860. After his death a collection was made by Paul Hamilton Hayne, in *The Poems of Henry Timrod*, 1873, the source of the texts below. A Memorial Edition, *Poems of Henry Timrod*, 1899, contained additional poems. *The Uncollected Poems of Henry Timrod*, edited by Guy A. Cardwell, 1942, increased the number of the collected poems. E. W. Parks edited *The Essays of Henry Timrod*, 1942, especially valuable in assembling the poet's critical essays. E. W. Parks also provided a good selection of the prose and verse, with bibliography and critical comment, in *Southern Poets*, American Writers Series, 1936.

Hayne's edition contains the first authoritative biographical sketch; see also the introductions to the other editions named. Biographical studies are G. A. Wauchope, *Henry Timrod: Man and Poet*, 1915; H. T. Thompson, *Henry Timrod: Laureate of the Confederacy*, 1928; and J. B. Hubbell, *The Last Years of Henry Timrod: 1864-1867*, 1941, containing valuable correspondence and fugitive prose.

Sonnet: I Scarcely Grieve<sup>1</sup>

I scarcely grieve, O Nature! at the lot  
 That pent my life within a city's bounds,  
 And shut me from thy sweetest sights and sounds.  
 Perhaps I had not learned, if some lone cot  
 Had nursed a dreamy childhood, what the mart 5  
 Taught me amid its turmoil; so my youth  
 Had missed full many a stern but wholesome truth.  
 Here, too, O Nature! in this haunt of Art,  
 Thy power is on me, and I own thy thrall.  
 There is no unimpressive spot on earth! 10  
 The beauty of the stars is over all,  
 And Day and Darkness visit every hearth.  
 Clouds do not scorn us: yonder factory's smoke  
 Looked like a golden mist when morning broke.

1860, 1873

## Sonnet: Most Men Know Love

Most men know love but as a part of life;  
 They hide it in some corner of the breast,  
 Even from themselves; and only when they rest  
 In the brief pauses of that daily strife,  
 Wherewith the world might else be not so rife, 5  
 They draw it forth (as one draws forth a toy  
 To soothe some ardent, kiss-exacting boy)  
 And hold it up to sister, child, or wife.  
 Ah me! why may not love and life be one?  
 Why walk we thus alone, when by our side, 10  
 Love, like a visible God, might be our guide?  
 How would the marts grow noble! and the street,  
 Worn like a dungeon-floor by weary feet,  
 Seem then a golden court-way of the Sun!

1873

1. Timrod's love of the sonnet form is strikingly revealed in his essay "The Character and Scope of the Sonnet," in *Russell's Magazine* for May, 1857, which may be found in Parks's edition of the *Essays*. There, and in the sonnets

themselves, one discovers Timrod's devotion and indebtedness to Wordsworth. "I Scarcely Grieve," although it speaks with Timrod's voice and experience, recalls Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge."

# The Cotton Boll<sup>2</sup>

While I recline  
 At ease beneath  
 This immemorial pine,  
 Small sphere!  
 (By dusky fingers brought this morning here 5  
 And shown with boastful smiles),  
 I turn thy cloven sheath,  
 Through which the soft white fibers peer,  
 That, with their gossamer bands,  
 Unite, like love, the sea-divided lands, 10  
 And slowly, thread by thread,  
 Draw forth the folded strands,  
 Than which the trembling line,  
 By whose frail help yon startled spider fled  
 Down the tall spear-grass from his swinging bed, 15  
 Is scarce more fine;  
 And as the tangled skein  
 Unravels in my hands,  
 Betwixt me and the noonday light,  
 A veil seems lifted, and for miles and miles 20  
 The landscape broadens on my sight,  
 As, in the little boll, there lurked a spell  
 Like that which, in the ocean shell,  
 With mystic sound,  
 Breaks down the narrow walls that hem us round, 25  
 And turns some city lane  
 Into the restless main,  
 With all his capes and isles!

Yonder bird,  
 Which floats, as if at rest, 30  
 In those blue tracts above the thunder, where  
 No vapors cloud the stainless air,  
 And never sound is heard,  
 Unless at such rare time  
 When, from the City of the Blest,<sup>3</sup> 35  
 Rings down some golden chime,

2. Timrod wrote two excellent odes on the Civil War, but "The Cotton Boll" is more disciplined in spirit and form than its companion piece, "Ethnogenesis." Although Lowell's "Commemoration Ode" has rather more formality, the two gifted poets, divided by war, reveal the same humanitarian impulses.

"The Cotton Boll" first appeared in the *Charleston Mercury* for September 3, 1861, and was collected in *The Poems of Henry Timrod* (1873).

3. *I.e.*, the heavenly city, or "new Jerusalem" (Revelation xxi, xxii); represented as the "City of the Blest" also by Dante, *Paradiso*, xxiv.

Sees not from his high place  
 So vast a cirque of summer space  
 As widens round me in one mighty field,  
 Which, rimmed by seas and sands, 40  
 Doth hail its earliest daylight in the beams  
 Of gray Atlantic dawns;  
 And, broad as realms made up of many lands,  
 Is lost afar  
 Behind the crimson hills and purple lawns 45  
 Of sunset, among plains which roll their streams  
 Against the Evening Star!  
 And lo!  
 To the remotest point of sight,  
 Although I gaze upon no waste of snow, 50  
 The endless field is white;  
 And the whole landscape glows,  
 For many a shining league away,  
 With such accumulated light  
 As Polar lands would flash beneath a tropic day! 55  
 Nor lack there (for the vision grows,  
 And the small charm within my hands—  
 More potent even than the fabled one,  
 Which oped whatever golden mystery  
 Lay hid in fairy wood or magic vale, 60  
 The curious ointment of the Arabian tale<sup>4</sup>—  
 Beyond all mortal sense  
 Doth stretch my sight's horizon, and I see,  
 Beneath its simple influence,  
 As if with Uriel's<sup>5</sup> crown, 65  
 I stood in some great temple of the Sun,  
 And looked, as Uriel, down!)  
 Nor lack there pastures rich and fields all green  
 With all the common gifts of God,  
 For temperate airs and torrid sheen 70  
 Weave Edens of the sod;  
 Through lands which look one sea of billowy gold  
 Broad rivers wind their devious ways;  
 A hundred isles in their embraces fold  
 A hundred luminous bays; 75  
 And through yon purple haze  
 Vast mountains lift their plumed peaks cloud-crowned;

4. The *Arabian Nights*, in which various charms of this sort appear; e.g., the "open sesame" of Ali Baba.

5. An archangel. Cf. Milton's light-

crowned "Regent of the Sun" (*Paradise Lost*, Book III, ll. 621-724). "Uriel" is Hebrew for "light of God."

And, save where up their sides the plowman creeps,  
 An unhewn forest girds them grandly round,  
 In whose dark shades a future navy sleeps! 80  
 Ye Stars, which, though unseen, yet with me gaze  
 Upon this loveliest fragment of the earth!  
 Thou Sun, that kindlest all thy gentlest rays  
 Above it, as to light a favorite hearth!  
 Ye Clouds, that in your temples in the West 85  
 See nothing brighter than its humblest flowers!  
 And you, ye Winds, that on the ocean's breast  
 Are kissed to coolness ere ye reach its bowers!  
 Bear witness with me in my song of praise,  
 And tell the world that, since the world began, 90  
 No fairer land hath fired a poet's lays,  
 Or given a home to man!

But these are charms already widely blown!  
 His be the meed whose pencil's trace  
 Hath touched our very swamps with grace, 95  
 And round whose tuneful way  
 All Southern laurels bloom;  
 The Poet of "The Woodlands,"<sup>6</sup> unto whom  
 Alike are known  
 'The flute's low breathing and the trumpet's tone, 100  
 And the soft west wind's sighs;  
 But who shall utter all the debt,  
 O land wherein all powers are met  
 That bind a people's heart,  
 The world doth owe thee at this day, 105  
 And which it never can repay,  
 Yet scarcely deigns to own!  
 Where sleeps the poet who shall fitly sing  
 The source wherefrom doth spring  
 That mighty commerce which, confined 110  
 To the mean channels of no selfish mart,  
 Goes out to every shore  
 Of this broad earth, and throngs the sea with ships  
 That bear no thunders; hushes hungry lips  
 In alien lands; 115  
 Joins with a delicate web remotest strands;  
 And gladdening rich and poor,  
 Doth gild Parisian domes,  
 Or feed the cottage-smoke of English homes,  
 And only bounds its blessings by mankind! 120

6. William Gilmore Simms (1806–1870), popular South Carolina poet and novelist, lived at "The Woodlands."

In offices like these, thy mission lies,  
 My Country! and it shall not end  
 As long as rain shall fall and Heaven bend  
 In blue above thee; though thy foes be hard  
 And cruel as their weapons, it shall guard 125  
 Thy hearth-stones as a bulwark; make thee great  
 In white and bloodless state;  
 And haply, as the years increase—  
 Still working through its humbler reach  
 With that large wisdom which the ages teach— 130  
 Revive the half-dead dream of universal peace!  
 As men who labor in that mine  
 Of Cornwall, hollowed out beneath the bed  
 Of ocean, when a storm rolls overhead,  
 Hear the dull booming of the world of brine 135  
 Above them, and a mighty muffled roar  
 Of winds and waters, yet toil calmly on,  
 And split the rock, and pile the massive ore,  
 Or carve a niche, or shape the archèd roof;  
 So I, as calmly, weave my woof 140  
 Of song, chanting the days to come,  
 Unsilenced, though the quiet summer air  
 Stirs with the bruit of battles, and each dawn  
 Wakes from its starry silence to the hum  
 Of many gathering armies. Still, 145  
 In that we sometimes hear,  
 Upon the Northern winds, the voice of woe  
 Not wholly drowned in triumph, though I know  
 The end must crown us, and a few brief years  
 Dry all our tears, 150  
 I may not sing too gladly. To thy will  
 Resigned, O Lord! we cannot all forget  
 That there is much even Victory must regret.  
 And, therefore, not too long  
 From the great burthen of our country's wrong 155  
 Delay our just release!  
 And, if it may be, save  
 These sacred fields of peace  
 From stain of patriot or of hostile blood!  
 Oh, help us, Lord! to roll the crimson flood 160  
 Back on its course, and while our banners wing  
 Northward, strike with us! till the Goth<sup>7</sup> shall cling  
 To his own blasted altar-stones, and crave

7. Romans regarded the Goths, a Teutonic people who invaded the Empire, as barbarians from the north.

Mercy; and we shall grant it, and dictate  
 The lenient future of his fate 165  
 There, where some rotting ships and crumbling quays  
 Shall one day mark the Port which ruled the Western seas.  
1861, 1873

## Charleston<sup>8</sup>

Calm as that second summer which precedes  
 The first fall of the snow,  
 In the broad sunlight of heroic deeds  
 The City bides the foe.

As yet, behind their ramparts stern and proud, 5  
 Her bolted thunders sleep—  
 Dark Sumter like a battlemented cloud  
 Looms o'er the solemn deep.

No Calpe<sup>9</sup> frowns from lofty cliff or scar  
 To guard the holy strand; 10  
 But Moultrie holds in leash her dogs of war  
 Above the level sand.

And down the dunes a thousand guns lie couched  
 Unseen beside the flood,  
 Like tigers in some Orient jungle crouched, 15  
 That wait and watch for blood.

Meanwhile, through streets still echoing with trade,  
 Walk grave and thoughtful men  
 Whose hands may one day wield the patriot's blade  
 As lightly as the pen. 20

And maidens with such eyes as would grow dim  
 Over a bleeding hound  
 Seem each one to have caught the strength of him  
 Whose sword she sadly bound.

Thus girt without and garrisoned at home, 25  
 Day patient following day,  
 Old Charleston looks from roof and spire and dome  
 Across her tranquil bay.

8. First published in the *Charleston Mercury* for December 13, 1862. Stanzas 2 and 3 reflect the initial confidence of the Confederates resulting from their control of the strategic port of Charleston. Within a month after her secession (December 20, 1860), South Carolina

had occupied Fort Moultrie without a struggle; fortified Castle Pinckney and the shore positions; and on April 13, 1861, forced the federal evacuation of Fort Sumter, thus securing the entrance of war materiel.

9. Gibraltar.

Ships through a hundred foes, from Saxon lands<sup>1</sup>  
 And spicy Indian ports 30  
 Bring Saxon steel and iron to her hands  
 And Summer to her courts.

But still, along yon dim Atlantic line  
 The only hostile smoke  
 Creeps like a harmless mist above the brine 35  
 From some frail, floating oak.

Shall the Spring dawn, and she, still clad in smiles  
 And with an unscathed brow,  
 Rest in the strong arms of her palm-crowned isles  
 As fair and free as now? 40

We know not: in the temple of the Fates  
 God has inscribed her doom;  
 And, all untroubled in her faith, she waits  
 The triumph or the tomb.

1862, 1873

## Ode

SUNG AT THE OCCASION OF DECORATING THE GRAVES OF THE CON-  
 FEDERATE DEAD, AT MAGNOLIA CEMETERY, CHARLESTON, S. C.,  
 JUNE 16, 1866.<sup>3</sup>

Sleep sweetly in your humble graves,  
 Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause;  
 Though yet no marble column craves  
 The pilgrim here to pause.

In seeds of laurel in the earth, 5  
 The garlands of your fame are sown;  
 And somewhere, waiting for its birth,  
 The shaft is in the stone!

Meanwhile, your sisters for the years  
 Which hold in trust your storied tombs, 10  
 Bring all they now can give you—tcars,  
 And these memorial blooms.

1. Chiefly England, which secretly supported and supplied the southerners in the earlier years of the war.

3. The poem was published in the *Charleston Courier*, June 18, 1866, and in a revised version, July 23, 1866, not noted until 1933 (G. P. Voigt, "New

Light on Timrod's Memorial Ode," *American Literature*, IV, January, 1933, 395-396). Collected in Hayne's edition (1873) and in Emerson's *Parnassus* (1874), it became Timrod's most familiar poem, in its earlier form, which is given here.



Small tributes! but your shades will smile  
 As proudly on those wreaths today,  
 As when some cannon-molded pile  
 Shall overlook this Bay.

15

Stoop, angels, hither from the skies!  
 There is no holier spot of ground  
 Than where defeated valor lies,  
 By mourning beauty crowned!

20

1866, 1873

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

(1809-1865)

In the affections of his countrymen, Lincoln has become a legend, and the actual events of his life are also common knowledge. His parents, Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, were virtually illiterate pioneers, and their child of destiny was born, on February 12, 1809, in a backwoods log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. Two years later, the Lincolns were tilling thirty acres of cleared land in the forest at Knob Creek, below Louisville. When the boy was only seven, the family trekked north across the Ohio into southern Indiana, taking squatter-rights on woodland again. There young Lincoln grew to manhood. His mother, a mystical and sensitive woman who influenced him deeply, died when he was nine. Her place was soon taken by Sarah Bush, practical and courageous, who encouraged his innate genius and ambition. Educational opportunities were limited—the boy spent no more than a year altogether in several school-houses—but he read and reread the few good books that he could

obtain, such as the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Aesop's Fables*, *Weems's Washington*, and *Grimshaw's History of the United States*. At nineteen he worked his way to New Orleans on a Mississippi flatboat.

When Lincoln was twenty-one, he accompanied the still-impoorished family westward, to Decatur, Illinois; but when, the next spring, Tom Lincoln decided upon a further move, to Coles County, the young frontiersman decided that he must strike out for himself. He agreed to take a flatboat loaded with merchandisc to New Orleans. Returning, Abe Lincoln brought history to the Sangamon country by settling at New Salem, near Springfield, Illinois. There the force of his homespun integrity gradually brought him into local prominence. From hired hand and rail splitter he rose to be storekeeper and postmaster of New Salem. He read whatever he could find, and studied law. An unsuccessful candidate in 1832 for election to the legisla-

ture, he went off to the five-weeks' Black Hawk War with a company of volunteers who elected him as captain.

In 1834, running as a Whig, he won the election and went to Vandalia, then the capital, on borrowed money, wearing a pair of new blue jeans. There his political moderation began to take form. He supported the opposition of his party to Jackson's financial policies, and he agreed with free-soilers that the federal authority legally extended to the control of slavery in the territories; however, on constitutional grounds, he had to oppose abolition in the states. But abolition was not yet a genuine political issue, and he held office for four consecutive terms (1834-1842). In 1837 he opened a law office in Springfield, the new capital. There, in 1842, he returned to private practice, and married Mary Todd.

During the next few years, as a circuit-riding lawyer, he won a modest prosperity and a considerable reputation. In 1847 the Illinois Whigs sent him to Congress, just as the brief Mexican War drew to its close. The question of slavery in the newly won territories divided the Whigs in such border states as Illinois. Lincoln consistently opposed the extension of slavery, and joined those who sought to embarrass Polk, the Democratic president, as instigator of a slave-state war. Lincoln knew at the time that by taking this stand he would alienate voters of all parties in Illinois, and he was not nominated in 1849.

Again in private practice in

Springfield, this time with William H. Herndon as his partner, he enjoyed great success as a lawyer, and continued to participate in politics, though apparently with no high ambitions. In 1854 he was again elected to the state legislature, but his opposition to the principle of squatter sovereignty embodied in Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Bill sent him stump speaking, and he resigned from the legislature in 1855 to run for the Senate. He was defeated, but threw the votes of his supporters in such a manner as to elect an opponent of Douglas.

In 1856, after the disruption of the southern Whigs by these controversies, Lincoln joined the newly formed Republican party, and in 1858 he was the candidate for the Senate against the Democrat, Stephen A. Douglas. At the party convention he made the famous declaration that "A house divided against itself cannot stand," in a speech which, then and later, was heard through the land. In his seven debates with Douglas during the campaign, he demonstrated his cool logic, his devastating humor, and his firm moderation as an enemy of slavery who opposed both the abolition and the extension of slavery on consistent constitutional principles. Although he lost the election, he was clearly a man who might lead the Republicans to national victory; yet it seems that he then had no such idea himself.

In the speech at Cooper Union in 1860 he repeated more formally the principles which he had developed in the heat of the debates. Now that secession was

openly advocated in the South, the preservation of the Union was the paramount issue; and this, he thought, could best be assured by strict adherence to the provisions of the Constitution, in respect to both the states and the territorial areas. Three months later the Republican party named him as their candidate. He defeated the candidates of the split Democratic party in November and was inaugurated on March 4, 1861.

The remainder of Lincoln's history is that of the Civil War. A few of the events which best reveal him are reflected in the selections in this volume. Unprepared by previous experience, he became, within two years, the master of complex and gigantic events, the principle strategist of the northern cause, and, as it seemed, the tragic embodiment of the nation's suffering, North and South. His second inauguration occurred on March 4, 1865. On April 9, Lee surrendered the remnant of the Army of Virginia to Grant at Appomattox. On the night of Good Friday, April 14, just six weeks after his inauguration, Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theatre, Wash-

ington. He died early the next morning.

Much might be said of Lincoln's place in literature, but that seems unnecessary. He spoke always from the heart of the people, with speech at once lofty and common; what he had to say seems to embody the best that they have learned of human compassion and nobility; and his words have been received and treasured around the earth as the language of humanity itself.

Among the collections of Lincoln's writings the most comprehensive is *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols., edited by Roy P. Basler and others, 1953. Standard, though less comprehensive, is *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 2 vols., edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay, 1894; enlarged, 12 vols., 1905. One-volume selections are *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, edited by Roy P. Basler, 1946, containing an excellent critical introduction; and *Selections from Lincoln*, 1927.

John G. Nicolay and John Hay wrote the comprehensive biography, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 10 vols., 1890. Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*, 2 vols., 1926, and *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, 4 vols., 1939, are classics. Satisfactory one-volume biographies are those by Lord Charnwood, 1917; and Albert J. Beveridge, 1928. Paul M. Angle compiled *The Lincoln Reader*, 1947, comprising selections from various biographies, chronologically arranged. See also James G. Randall, *Lincoln the President*, 4 vols., 1945-55; and Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, 1952, the best brief account.

## Reply to Horace Greeley<sup>5</sup>

EXECUTIVE MANSION,  
WASHINGTON, August 22, 1862

HON. HORACE GREELEY.

DEAR SIR:—I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the New York *Tribune*. If there be in it any state-

5. Horace Greeley (1811-1872), the powerful editor of the New York *Tribune*, an ardent free-soiler and abolitionist, had supported Lincoln from the beginning, and sponsored his appearance

in New York for the address at Cooper Union. However, in the summer of 1862 he shared the opinion of many northerners who criticized Lincoln's hesitation to emancipate the slaves—an act which

ments or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them.<sup>6</sup> If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not, now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men, everywhere, could be free.

Yours,

A. LINCOLN.

## Letter to General Joseph Hooker<sup>7</sup>

January 26, 1863

MAJOR-GENERAL HOOKER.

GENERAL. I have placed you at the head of the Army of the

he long postponed in accordance with the conciliatory spirit of his first-inaugural message. Greeley's open letter to Lincoln, entitled "A Prayer of Twenty Millions," appeared in the *Tribune* on August 19, 1862. On July 22, Lincoln had already shown his cabinet a first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, but he was withholding it until a decisive improvement in the military fortunes of the North might give it proper emphasis. Meanwhile he replied to Greeley as here shown; the letter appeared in the *National Intelligencer* for August 23, 1862. A month later, on September 22, 1862, after Lee's army had been forced to withdraw at Antietam (September 17), Lincoln issued his famous Proclamation.

6. *I.e.*, public policy forbade his revealing that he had already written the Emancipation Proclamation.

7. Lincoln's letter to Hooker reflects the darkest Union crisis in the Civil War. During 1862, the inactivity of General McClellan, commanding the major

Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it; and now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN.

## Letter to General U. S. Grant<sup>8</sup>

July 13, 1863

MAJOR-GENERAL U. S. GRANT.

MY DEAR GENERAL: I do not remember that you and I ever met. Army of the Potomac, stretched northern nerves to the limit. He was succeeded by Burnside, who combined a gallant aggressiveness with dangerous recklessness. The battle at Fredericksburg, December 13, resulting in disastrous carnage, aggravated the wave of despair and criticism, in which subordinate generals participated. General Hooker, after Fredericksburg, had openly advocated a "dictatorship." Lincoln also knew that he talked too much, drank heavily, and resisted authority; but he had justly earned in combat the nickname of Fighting Joe, he was a good strategist, and the troops idolized him. In elevating him to chief command, Lincoln handed him this

frank letter, one of the most remarkable in military annals. Later, failing to defeat Lee at Chancellorsville (May 4, 1863), Hooker gallantly resigned his command, and was succeeded by Meade. On July 4, 1863, Grant, who had risen from obscurity, forced the surrender of Vicksburg and its thirty thousand defenders, gaining control of the lower Mississippi after two months of strategic maneuvers and engagements on incredibly difficult terrain. On the same day, the Battle of Gettysburg had ended Lee's penetration of the northern heartland, but Lincoln was bitterly disappointed because Meade, having made a last-ditch if courageous defense in a battle forced upon him, had then failed to

personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do what you finally did—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo Pass expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks, and when you turned northward, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

Yours,

A. LINCOLN

### Address at the Dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery<sup>1</sup>

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war; testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us

pursue and destroy Lee's broken but gallant army in retreat. Grant, by contrast, had for months steadily seized the initiative and had now virtually divided the Confederate territory. A few months after this letter, Lincoln appointed Grant as commander in chief of all the Armies, including Meade's.

1. The thousands of dead were hastily buried at Gettysburg, but part of the battlefield was at once set apart as a national memorial where the slain could be reverently enshrined. Within three months, dedication ceremonies were announced, and numerous government dignitaries invited to attend. Edward Everett, honored statesman and orator, was chosen as the speaker. Although Lincoln had been invited to say a few appropriate words, it was not supposed that he could spare the time from his

duties as president and commander in chief. Yet he had privately wanted such an opportunity to tell the plain people, simply, what was the true spiritual and democratic meaning of the war. Belatedly he accepted, and had the opportunity to compose only a first draft of his remarks before leaving Washington. The next morning in Gettysburg, he made a revised draft. On November 19, 1863, at least fifteen thousand people listened while Everett recited, for two hours, a memorized address, a fine example of the formal oratory of his day. Then Lincoln stood before the throng, and in two minutes, scarcely glancing at the single page in his hand, spoke the two hundred and sixty words which succeeding generations were to repeat as their own rededication to the democratic love of mankind.

the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God,<sup>2</sup> shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people,<sup>3</sup> shall not perish from the earth.

## Second Inaugural Address<sup>4</sup>

### FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would

2. The words "under God," not in the earlier manuscript, came to Lincoln's lips as he spoke, and were included in copies of the speech that he later made. (See Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 402.)

3. Whether Lincoln knew it or not, Theodore Parker, Boston clergyman and abolition leader, in an antislavery address in 1850 had characterized democracy as "a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people."

4. At Lincoln's second inaugural, on March 4, 1865, the defeat of the Confederacy was assured. Within the previous six months, Sherman had swept victoriously from Atlanta to the sea and northward again, Sheridan had cleared the Shenandoah and Thomas the

Tennessee country, Grant had the remnant of the Army of Virginia cornered in the defense of Richmond, and Lincoln had received the first Confederate peace delegation. These events were reflected in the words of the grave leader, haggard and careworn at the virtual moment of triumph, as he stood in a portico of the Capitol to deliver his inaugural address, the bronze statue of Freedom, which had been prone four years before, now mounted on the completed dome above his head. To the throng that surrounded him he uttered, in his noble last sentence, the words of forgiveness and love toward the vanquished that have re-echoed around the world, and may live forever. Six weeks later, on Easter eve, he lay dead of the assassin's bullet.

make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease.<sup>5</sup> Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged.<sup>6</sup> The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."<sup>7</sup> If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."<sup>8</sup>

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

5. *I.e.*, that the slaves would already have been freed, by the Emancipation Proclamation, effective January 1, 1863.

6. *Cf.* Matthew vii: 1.

7. *Cf.* Matthew xviii: 7.

8. *Cf.* Psalms xix: 9.





# The Emergence of Modern American Literature



The half century from the Civil War to the first World War was an epoch of dynamic change in American life, and of corresponding developments in literature. During this period the nation consolidated its continental domain, absorbed a host of immigrants, developed its potential as the most resourceful industrial powerhouse in the world, and moved toward a genuine hegemony in world affairs. The young nation finally put off its country ways and assumed the character of an urban civilization, while grappling, with uneven success, with the many responsibilities, political problems, and social disorders accompanying changes so fundamental and gigantic.

The conquered Southland, at the beginning of this era, was fully occupied with the problems of reconstruction and survival, but the industrial machine of the North, geared to a new high by the recent demands of the war, soon attained an unprecedented productive capacity. Immigrants thronged into the industrial centers, or joined the march of older Americans to the West, where

the last frontiers gave way before the growth of railroads, the improvement of farm machinery, and expanding markets. Within a few years even the South, having survived military occupation, exploitation by carpetbaggers and scalawags, and political reprisals from Washington, had developed a new economy of small farmsteads and sharecroppers, with a newborn retail market at the crossroads and a revived urban prosperity responding to the mounting demand for staple crops. As a whole, the period immediately succeeding the Civil War was marked by the restless expansion of new lands and new wealth, by an increasing solidarity among the various sections of the country, by the discovery and exploitation of new natural resources, by the development of revolutionary inventions, new technologies, and new industries, by great accumulations of capital, and by a spirit of optimism and speculation so overwhelming that only the most serious gave attention to the burgeoning economic atrocities and delinquencies that are now associated with the period of

Grant's presidency.

By the 1880's, however, the growing pains of rapid expansion, and the consequent social dislocations, were everywhere acutely evident. The agrarian interests, the still-feeble labor movement, and the underprivileged urban masses found common cause against the industrial giant and his financial overlords. Reform movements and labor unrest appeared in successive waves of protest, while financial crises, and the exposure of governmental and private schemes to exploit the economy, only accentuated the widening gap between the privileged or ruthless few and the great majority who did not seem to share proportionately in the prosperity of the world's richest nation. Confronted with the *laissez-faire* economics of the Gospel of Wealth, serious reform thinkers in the eighties and nineties viewed the existing order with increasing distaste and pessimism. Their concern was heightened by government acts of intervention and so-called financial "imperialism" overseas, of which the Spanish-American War of 1898 caused the most violent reactions among the liberals. By this time, however, the reform and labor movements, which had seemed so abortive only two decades earlier, had begun to consolidate and to exert strong political pressure, while new social and economic legislation improved the prospects of the average citizen. For more than a decade before the end of this period in 1914, the American scene was marked by relative domestic peace and or-

derly economic development, as though in preparation for the ordeals of world war which lay ahead.

#### FROM ROMANTICISM TO REALISM

American writers and thinkers, attempting to express the shifting tensions and complexities of these strenuous decades, moved steadily from romanticism toward increasingly realistic objectives and literary forms, and toward pragmatic, instrumental, or naturalistic interpretations of man and his destiny. The process was gradual, reflecting the periodic fluctuations in the history of American society. During this period, however, literature became a genuine instrument of evaluation and expression in American life; it found for the first time a vast and general audience representing the people as a whole; it ultimately produced a highly critical realistic movement whose characteristic works were quite clearly the product of a different world from that which, in the previous generation, had been represented by the romantic idealism of Cooper and Irving, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Longfellow.

In this process, the Civil War provided a dramatic point of cleavage. As Mark Twain shrewdly observed in writing *The Gilded Age*: "The eight years in America from 1860 to 1868 uprooted institutions that were centuries old, changed the politics of a people, transformed the social life of half the country, and wrought so profoundly upon the entire national character that the influence cannot be

measured." For literature one measure of the change is to compare the popular and typical works of the five years before the war with those of the same period succeeding the struggle. The accepted tradition of our literature in the years from 1855 to 1861 was represented in the publication of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, Emerson's *English Traits* and *The Conduct of Life*, Simms's romances—*The Forayers* and *Eutaw*—Irving's *Life of Washington*, Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, Holmes's *Autocrat papers*, and Whittier's *Home Ballads*. By contrast, directly after the war, during the years from 1867 to 1872, the country heard for the first time the genuine voice of the new West, in such stories by Bret Harte as "The Luck of Roaring Camp"; in Mark Twain's earliest successes—*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* and *Other Sketches*, *The Innocents Abroad*, and *Roughing It*; in John Hay's *Pike County Ballads* and Joaquin Miller's *Songs of the Sierras*. During the same years a new standard of reality in the portrayal of contemporary life was evident in such works as John W. De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy*, and Edward Eggleston's *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*. Above all, Henry James and William Dean Howells, who were destined to take their places beside Mark Twain as the great figures of the realistic movement, made their

first important contributions: James in 1871, when he published "A Passionate Pilgrim" in a periodical, and Howells in his first novel, *Their Wedding Journey* (1872).

Yet the older voices were not stilled. Many romantic authors no longer living, such as Cooper, Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne, continued to grow in popularity; and new publications by such earlier writers as Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, and Holmes continued to exert an influence. For two decades, beginning authors in this age of transition were caught between the ideals of the older world and those of a new age that was struggling to find its voice. It is no wonder that many young writers, especially among the pioneers of realism, were not able to be faithful to its demands. This was especially true of the early regionalists. Such writers as Harte, Cable, and Harris realistically depicted the daily and common actualities and dialects of their localities; they sought to identify characters with their surroundings, and sometimes achieved psychological penetration in this respect. In general, however, the regionalists exaggerated the picturesque, the charming, or the bizarre to create what came to be known as "local color"; and they all to some degree surrendered to the didactic impulse, and sentimentalized their characters in support of some predetermined moral judgment or ideal, as Bret Harte did in his picture of Poker Flat, with its outcasts and fallen women. In addition, the rise of realism was

strenuously opposed by certain authors who, combining serious purpose with superior talents, regarded themselves as defenders of ideality, of aesthetic purity, or of certain fixed standards of propriety or morality. Even Howells, a vigorous defender of "decency" in literature, was criticized, because of his preference for the commonplace, as one who "copied life"—a familiar false charge—or built in paving blocks instead of Pentelican marble.

To be sure, the defenders of ideality found strenuous opponents. Even before the war, Whitman was attacking the code of chivalry, the wasted life of the sheltered female, and the unreality of the standards of fictional romance and Byronic poetry. He was soon assisted by younger authors, especially those of the western frontiers. Bret Harte's *Condensed Novels*, published in 1867, contained irresistible parodies of Dumas, Dickens, Cooper, and others; Mark Twain irreverently lampooned Scott for engendering the "Sir Walter Disease," and Cooper for his incredible Indians and his ignorance of the real frontier. Yet romanticism was not really vanquished at the popular level. The sentimental domestic novel continued to flourish, and the cheaper magazines, responding to a surge of newly won respectability among the middle class, still dripped with the didactic sentiment that had been established, principally by lady poets and novelists, before the war. Finally, the historical and regional romance, always widely read, reached new heights of

popularity by the end of the century.

A comparatively few authors, with a more limited audience, became the pioneers of the literature now recognized as "modern" in spirit and in form. In the largest sense, this realistic modernity in a work of literature results from several factors: the author's insistence upon strict analytical observation of the subject, and his determination to portray it exactly; an increased awareness of psychological phenomena, which enlarges the writer's franchise and the reader's tolerance in the selection of materials that might once have been rejected as too commonplace or as actually sordid; and the full recognition of the writer's social function as the critic and interpreter of life. These factors, or a significant portion of them, were present in the best efforts of the memorable writers of the realistic movement in the nineteenth century, and taken as a whole, they may serve as a description, if not a definition, of the realistic impulse.

Three of the earliest poets to respond to the new spirit were actually rooted very deeply in the romantic idealism of the waning epoch, but because of particular gifts of character or fortune, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Sidney Lanier each spoke with a new voice combining noble and enduring elements from both ages, the old and the new. Whitman, born the same year as Lowell, but slower in finding his subject, stood apart from the romantics even in 1855, when the first small edition of *Leaves of Grass*

was an ugly duckling, while Longfellow's *Hiawatha* paddled approved down the mainstream of literature. Yet Whitman's vision of America was based on the idealism of the past—on the individualism of Jefferson and Tom Paine; on the intuitional faith of Emerson and on transcendental humanitarianism; on the reform movements and proletarian idealism that had accompanied the rise of the common man in the Age of Jackson. At the same time, Whitman produced a verse that was destined to revolutionize the form of modern poetry; his psychological realism, coupled with his interest in science, enabled him to transfigure "forbidden" subjects; and no later realist ever looked more sharply than he, or with more gusto, at the commonplace object or the lowly person. Emily Dickinson was a product of Amherst village, where colonial America lingered in puritan overtones. She inherited the tradition of the romantic nature poets; but her realism and psychological truth made her seem contemporary to a much later generation. Sidney Lanier, a Georgia regionalist bred in the old South, infused his nature poetry with the southern economics of corn and cotton, with incisive criticism of the growing abuses of the industrial and mercantile systems, and with a stirring sense of the complexities of individual responsibility.

#### REGIONALISM

Mark Twain, the earliest gigantic figure among the regionalists, was indebted, like Harte and Cable and other contemporaries, to progenitors among the

humbler comic journalists. From the Age of Jackson onward, they had inundated the popular press with anecdotes and fiction drawn from sources deep in the common life of America. In this literature, most of it decidedly regional in character, the humorous anecdote mingled with white and Negro folklore, with frontier tall tales and hunting stories, and with folk song and balladry. The best of the regional literature, serious and comic, ultimately provided a better understanding of the United States as a whole. Whitman and Mark Twain both asserted that the great writer must "absorb" his country, but amid the swift changes of American life, the "great American novel" which critics had been demanding could not be written. However, as Eggleston remarked in 1892, looking back upon the regional movement, the great American novel appeared "in sections"—in the matured realism of Twain and Howells, in the novels of such lesser writers as Eggleston himself and De Forest, and in the stories of Cable and Harris, Aldrich, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Garland, and Crane. A movement that had begun in broad humor and in the wider horizons of the West and Southwest produced also, particularly among the women writers and the New Englanders, the accurate depiction of the domestic scene, the narrow life, the individual character, caught in some humble light that reminds the reader of the work of the *genre* painters of the Flemish school, at once highly individuated and intensely national. In fiction

thus motivated, the increasing consciousness of the influence of environment on character and fate prepared the way for the growing spirit of naturalistic and sociological determinism.

#### THE GILDED AGE

This awareness of American social and economic life was characteristic of the later literature of the realistic movement. By 1870 the country had already begun to experience the abuses and dislocations that accompany a rapid change in the character of civilization, and by 1875 the public and private morality of the land had reached its lowest ebb, in the period called by Mark Twain "the Gilded Age," and by others "the Tragic Era" or "the Great Barbecue." Within a decade industrial production had tripled, and railroads spanning the continent had brought the shrinking frontiers into a national economy. The enlarged demand for labor had attracted immigrants in such numbers that there were nearly seven and a half million foreign born in a population of about forty million. The new Atlantic cable and the expansion of practicable telegraphic communications further augmented the great strides of American commerce and domestic trade. In the older cities, crowded with newcomers, fortunes were quickly made and lost amid a general atmosphere of speculation and chicanery, and the mansions of the new millionaires burgeoned in contrast with the poverty of the new slums. The endless drive to the West was now continued by a host of homesteading farmers and immigrants from north-

ern Europe; they suffered the privations and poverty of a new soil, but by 1880 they had brought into cultivation twenty million acres of virgin land and founded an agricultural economy which reached from the grain and cattle ranches of the Midwest to the orchards in the fertile valleys of the Pacific coast. In this West, with its limitless opportunities, its violent contrasts, and its seething mixture of old American settlers with immigrants from many lands, a social democracy developed that was new in the history of mankind.

However, the gap between the rich and the poor had actually widened in the industrial centers, and the vast numbers of workers, augmented by the hordes of underprivileged immigrants, began to form a working class in the European sense. Working conditions were still almost unregulated; a working day of from ten to twelve hours prevailed; and labor organizations were in the embryonic stage. Meanwhile, the operations of the "robber barons" of industry and finance, having gained their first real headway amid the scandals during Grant's administration, had risen to proportions justifying the unlovely epithets by which this age has been designated. Parrington, in *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America*, says of the audacious leaders of the day that "they fought their way encased in rhinoceros hides"—the gamblers of Wall Street, the Drews, the Vanderbilts, Jim Fiske, Jay Gould, "blackguards for the most part, railway wreckers, cheaters and swindlers"; they were assisted by treasury-looting,

vote-selling political bosses such as Tweed, Wood, and Cameron; they were supported by "professional keepers of the public morals" such as Comstock and Beecher; while the public in general seemed to take for granted the gaudy extravagance and "humbuggery" of an age in which Barnum was the predestined showman. A series of panics and depressions, beginning in 1873, increased the burdens and the discontent of the poor. A stouthearted believer in his country, Walt Whitman, excoriating his age with whiplash words in *Democratic Vistas* (1871), could only conclude that "the problem of the future of America is in certain respects as dark as it is vast."

This is not to assert that the realists at once devoted themselves primarily to the social and economic problem novel, although by 1890 many of them were doing so. The realists of the 1870's were sternly aware of the social problem, but their emphasis was on the character of the individual confronted by hardships or moral dilemmas. That the best of realism was not then a literature of reform is evident in the best work of the regionalists in general, and of Mark Twain, Howells, and Henry James, among the masters. For two decades Howells, who was chiefly distinguished for his novels of character, remained the spokesman of realism by virtue of his ability to communicate its spirit in fiction and essay, and to disseminate his *obiter dicta* from the editor's chair of the *Atlantic*, and later *Harper's Magazine*. Many other realists

imposed fewer restrictions as to propriety, and thus ranged over wider areas of life, but no other was more genuinely respected as an artist or more widely heard than Howells. Whether in his early comedies of manners, in his portrayals of the contrasts of international society, or in such novels concerning the business world as *The Rise of Silas Lap- ham* (1885), his emphasis was on character—until his declining years, after 1890, when his problem novels were written.

The greatest of the realists, Henry James, was the master of profundity and of a psychological subtlety more suited to the understanding of the present age than his own; his great novels are studies of character first of all, and the rise or ruin of his notable characters is predetermined at the very roots of existence or experience.

The work of the later American realists was both substantiated and strengthened by the new vogue of European realists, who had been disparaged by earlier readers on moral grounds—such Russians as Dostoevski, Turgenev, and Tolstoi, and the French naturalists, especially Zola, Flaubert, and Maupassant. The same sources may have strengthened the note of pessimistic determinism that steadily increased down into the nineties, when a full-fledged American naturalism developed. Mark Twain, however, came to this position independently. This gloomy attitude may be the necessary frame of reference for the great humorist; in the case of Twain, in any event, it dominated his genius. Even his ear-

liest comic sketches are overshadowed by the same specter of mankind's cruelty, greed, and stupidity that lurks in such later masterpieces as "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1900) and *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916).

The social problems of the country grew in size with its industrial and financial development, and it seemed that the American experiment, undertaken by Europeans to secure liberty, was doomed to produce for the masses only unrewarding poverty. During the later eighties the preoccupation of the national thought with social and economic problems was reflected in a swelling tide of literature. Conservative economic ideas were championed by many, such as William Graham Sumner, who, in *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (1883), defended capitalism as the operation of a benign natural selection of those fit to survive. Andrew Carnegie's *Triumphant Democracy* (1886) sounded much the same note. Meanwhile the collectivists gained their widest audience in a long succession of utopian novels, of which Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) was the most influential. Howells, who by this time was a Christian socialist in theory, became the critic of economic society in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), the first of his economic novels, and in 1894 enriched the utopian movement by publishing *A Traveler from Altruria*. Actually, in retrospect the social advances of those years are seen to be considerable. They were the climax to a titanic economic de-

velopment which had produced many social problems, but the gains were being consolidated, and were soon to be felt in permanent improvements in the economic welfare of Americans in general. The Populist movement, begun in 1891, never won an election, but the members of that shifting coalition of farm- and labor-reform groups—chiefly sustained by the mounting democracy of the West—under the leadership of Bryan saw most of their objectives enormously advanced in little more than a decade. Theodore Roosevelt, in liberal reforms from 1901 to 1909, curbed the monopolies and "the malefactors of great wealth," instituted a sound policy to conserve the national resources for the people, and became the first president to make the welfare of "the little man" a powerful political issue. However, our literature had long before this developed, during the nineties, a naturalistic tendency which has survived well into the present troubled century.

#### SPIRITUAL UNREST

Strict naturalism in the European sense did not at first flourish widely in this country, where it was understood that social remedies were available even if sometimes opposed or postponed. After 1880, however, a growing spirit of skepticism, of spiritual unrest and disturbed religious faith, was reflected in the changing economic thought and morality of America and in the deterministic attitudes of intellectuals and writers. When Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859 it was still possible for Whitman to regard the



book as an optimistic confirmation of the ancient belief in man's progress and gradual betterment. John Fiske, like lesser early popularizers of evolutionary science, expounded its theories in the light of theistic faith, and rejoiced that God was revealed in biology as in Scripture. However, it was soon evident that pessimistic determinism was inherent in the new biology, anthropology, and geology, as well as in the recent experiences of economic man. The theory that the human individual, as much as any creature of a lower order, is determined by accidents of heredity, environment, and natural selection, seemed to deprive him of that special place among the creatures of God that had been the comfort of his religion, and of that necessary exercise of individual responsibility which had been common to democratic idealism and the Christian ethic. Herbert Spencer's sociology utilized the biological theory of the survival of the fittest in support of competition as an agency which prevented "the artificial preservation of those least able to take care of themselves." Rugged individualists—*laissez-faire* economists such as Sumner or industrialists such as Carnegie—could take comfort, but many others watched the struggling industrial masses, still poverty-stricken amid plenty, and wondered whether these were really the ways of God.

The literary reactions were variously expressed by such thinkers as William James, Santayana, and Henry Adams, by poets like Moody, Lodge, and Robinson, by such social critics

as Veblen and Steffens, and by the later realistic and naturalistic novelists, influenced, as they were, by the writings of the Russian and French naturalists. American philosophy, represented by William James, Santayana, and Dewey, tended toward instrumentalism and rationalism, in contrast with the intuitionist idealism of the nineteenth century. If the thinkers of this period evaded outright pessimism, it was by some dualistic resolution of their systems of thought. From his researches in psychology, James drew his "radical empiricism" in *The Will to Believe* (1897)—a defense of the acceptance of metaphysical concepts on the evidence of faith alone. In *Pragmatism* (1907) he gave a name to his new philosophy, which asserts that the value of an idea is tested by its consequences in terms of satisfaction and behavior. John Dewey's instrumentalism was a projection of pragmatism in the evaluation of experience, education, and social instruments in an age of change. Santayana's complex and voluminous system cannot be recapitulated with any simplicity. Its dualism differentiates between the material universe—the reality that man can apprehend only through reason—and the "essences" of higher reality and supernal value in the "realms" of faith. Henry Adams suggested a correspondence between the science and the philosophy of the day in his dynamic theory of history. Accepting the Spencerian hypothesis that history is evolutionary, he sought its laws by analogy with the principle of thermo-

dynamics that energy tends constantly to be dispersed from a center. In *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1904) he depicted medieval Christianity as a "universe." By contrast, the contemporary world, depicted in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), was a "multiverse" whose symbol was the dynamo, dissipating its energies outward toward diverse poles, with consequent loss of emphasis on individual and social spiritual value.

#### NATURALISM

It was against this background of troubled thought that the first American naturalistic writers emerged in the 1890's, but they were by no means simply the product of philosophic thought. Artists first of all, and realists in their aims, they were in general impressed by the artistic success of European naturalists and by the resources of the empirical description of experience as a means for securing the realistic portrayal of life.

The typical American naturalists were generally concerned with concrete factors in character and environment. The short-lived and able Frank Norris, in such novels as *Moran of the Lady Letty* (1898) and *McTeague* (1899), explored the personality with naturalistic fervor and only incidental social connotations; but in *The Octopus* (1901), his best-known work, he made a telling attack upon the ramified system of monopolistic financial and railroad power that for a time exploited and often ruined the farmers of the West. In *The Pit* (1903) he examined the drive for economic power in an

analysis of the grain monopoly. Stephen Crane found vent for his naturalism in studies of the eastern slums, of the meanness of small-town life, and of the natural depravity of man. Hamlin Garland's conception of strict, delineative realism, which he called "veritism," was in fact naturalistic both in method and materials; his sketches in *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891) deal with characters whose choices are effectively canceled by circumstances or by the conditions of nature. Theodore Dreiser, who also belongs to this generation by date of birth, was the purest naturalist among American writers. Circumstances postponed the creation of *Sister Carrie* (1900), his first work, until he was nearly thirty; and the smothering of that book by unofficial censorship further delayed his active career as a novelist. Carrie Meeber conquers the nearly impossible conditions of poverty only by the animal law of survival, of which she takes advantage with intelligence, ruthlessness, and calm disregard of conventional moral restrictions.

Dreiser alone of these early naturalists and dissenters inherited the literary world after 1915, for which their generation had prepared the way. Garland in later years devoted himself for the most part to more popular forms of fiction. Norris and Crane both died at thirty. But younger authors continued the social dissent, the most important novelists among them being Upton Sinclair and Jack London, who both wrote with tempered naturalism. *The Jungle* (1906) grew out of Sinclair's in-

vestigation of the stockyards and packing industry, and brought results in the form of pure-food legislation; but its fictional interest is the story of Jurgis, the Slavic workman, trapped by the brutality, poverty, and disease in which he lives, until bereft of wife and family, brought to the brink of crime, he becomes a socialist agitator. Jack London, unlike Sinclair, remained throughout his career a naturalist and radical socialist. Typical are *The Call of the Wild* (1903), a study of the law of survival in the life of a wild dog; *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), in which the same motivations are transferred to the whaling Captain, Wolf Larsen, a ruthless superman; and *The Iron Heel* (1907), a novel of class warfare. In a sense the short-story formula that O. Henry employed to portray his children of chance—typically in *The Four Million* (1906)—is a satiric response to a naturalistic predisposition.

It is evident that there is no clear cleavage between the nineteenth and the twentieth century

in American literature. Victorian acceptances and compromises, genteel survivals, lingered on until 1910 and beyond; but the modern temper which about 1915 produced the "twentieth-century renaissance" originated in the intellectual life of the previous century. The emerging modern American literature, which began with the optimistic voice of Whitman, closed the first decade of the twentieth century with social and economic protest. The one nation, strong and unified, which Lincoln had envisioned, had become an actuality. Urban industrialism posed still-imponderable questions of slum clearance, social welfare, and labor practices. The romantic idealism of 1865 had given way to the realism of Howells, to the psychological penetration of James, to the naturalism of Crane, Norris, and Dreiser. Yet our literature continued to reflect the survival in American life of those youthful virtues that remind us of what we have been and what we should ever strive to be.



# Pioneers of a New Poetry

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WALT WHITMAN

(1819-1892)

Walt Whitman is important to our literature first of all because he was a great poet. "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" or "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" or "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"—to name only a few—would be masterpieces in any literature. Second, as an artist he had the kind of courage and vision upon which new epochs are founded. In 1855 he was the first voice of the revolution which after 1870 swept over European literature, and much later reached the United States.

That kind of genius which is uncommon sense made him know that the time had come for many barriers to fall—barriers to the welfare and the expression of the individual, which he valued above all else. Thus, in advance of the "new" psychology he insisted on the unity of the personality and the significant importance of all experience. He extolled the values of the common, the miracle of the mouse, the wholesome soundness of the calloused hand, the body's sweat. He attempted "to make illustrious" the "procreative urge

of the universe," or of sex in man.

Whitman's free verse provided an example that slowly communicated itself to later poets who likewise sought to refresh their art. His use of rhythm as a fluid instrument of verse demonstrated a range of possibilities beyond that of conventional meter. He wrote symphonically, associating themes and melodies with great freedom and suggestiveness; he abandoned conventional and hackneyed poetic figures and drew his symbolism freshly from experience. He remains one of our most important poets because he announced and instructed a new age; but he is equally important as a defender of the central American idealism of the past. Spiritually he sprang from the tradition that Emerson represented—his was the transcendental or intuitional temperament that trusts the innate spiritual intimations of the individual and makes him responsible to them. On the plane of political thought he was also an apostle of individualism, and represented the nineteenth-century

projection of Jeffersonian idealism.

Walter Whitman was born on a farm on Long Island, then rural countryside, on May 31, 1819; his father was of British, his mother of Dutch, ancestry. Walter Whitman senior, a carpenter as well as a farmer, twice in Walt's youth tried his fortune at housebuilding in Brooklyn, at that time not quite a city in size. Thus the young poet experienced a vital cross section of American common life: about the island the farmers and fishermen, the sailors and clammers, and the hamlets in which they lived; the nascent urban community of Brooklyn, where a boy could still catch fish in a nearby pond; the great harbor with its ships, and across the water the spires of Manhattan, visited by means of the exciting ferryboats, and later to become for the poet always "my city." As a boy he had five years of common schooling in Brooklyn, then in 1830 began work as an office boy. But by natural instinct he turned to the printing offices. Until the early fifties he worked as a journalist, attaining a considerable position as editor of the Brooklyn *Eagle* (1846-1848). On the way up he was an apprentice on the Long Island *Patriot* (1832) and a journeyman printer in New York. Then, after teaching in various country schools on Long Island while contributing to local newspapers, he founded at Huntington his own weekly newspaper, the *Long Islander*, in 1838. In 1839 he was a compositor on the Long Island *Democrat*, and in 1840, at twenty-one, he stumped the Is-

land for Van Buren during the presidential campaign. During the next six years he was in New York, as newspaperman and as editor of the *Aurora*, the *Tatler*, and the New York *Democrat*. When he took over the *Eagle* in Brooklyn in 1846 he was seasoned in his profession, and he gained recognition in the New York area during his editorship. He resigned in 1848 because the backers of the paper, faced with the split in the Democratic party caused by the Mexican War, found it expedient to support compromise with the southern Democrats, while their editor was an unswerving free-soil Democrat. Probably for adventure's sake, Whitman then took the editorship of the New Orleans *Crescent*, traveling southward partly by Mississippi steamboat with his brother Jeff; he returned in six months to edit the Brooklyn *Freeman*.

But now he had in mind his great project. Shaken by the ominous shadows that gathered over the country as "the irrepressible conflict" took shape in the Mexican War, he had conceived of a book to interpret American democratic idealism as he had experienced it. It was to be a poem in a new form with which he had been experimenting since perhaps 1847. He gave up his newspaper work, and living with his parents in Brooklyn, worked as part-time carpenter while writing *Leaves of Grass*. The first edition went on sale in New York probably on July 4, 1855. It had been privately printed, as were all but two of the first seven editions. The frankness of *Leaves of Grass*, together with its revo-

lutionary form, precluded the possibility of wide reception. It was simply about sixty years ahead of its time, and Whitman, realizing this, accepted the situation with equanimity, knowing "the amplitude of time." There was a dribble of orders for each successive edition, most of them sold from his home, wherever it then might be.

But it is a mistake to suppose that the author was neglected. Emerson wrote his famous message, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career," less than three weeks after Whitman sent him a copy. Within the year Thoreau and Bronson Alcott had ferreted out the author's dwelling in Brooklyn, and Emerson himself soon paid a visit. So through the years, leaders of thought saw the greatness of what he was doing. By 1868 the young John Burroughs had written a book on Whitman and William Michael Rossetti had responded to a growing interest among English intellectuals by publishing an English edition. During the 1870's Whitman's name began to be mentioned by German critics, and within another decade translations of his poems in German and French made him famous on the Continent. Still most Americans ignored his work, and he lived in poverty all his life.

From 1855 until 1862 he subsisted by literary hack work and journalism in Brooklyn, meanwhile enlarging his poems for the second edition of 1856 and the fundamental edition of 1860. There the poems began to fall into position as parts of a single "poem," as the author said. It

was to represent life in terms of one life, which had to be seen through the poet's eyes, yet he would be reporting only what seemed true and important to everyone.

In 1862, his brother George was wounded, and Whitman went to the war front in Virginia. Finding his brother's condition not serious, he remained in Washington as a volunteer war nurse, visiting hospitals for a part of every day, and supporting himself by part-time work in the Army paymaster's office. This was the experience which led to the poems of *Drum-Taps* (1865). "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," written for the second issue of this book, after the assassination of Lincoln that April, provided a passionate climax for the theme of the entire volume in its veneration of the President, who represented for Whitman a shining example of democratic comradeship and love for man.

In 1865, Whitman was appointed clerk in the Bureau of Indian Affairs only to be discharged in six months by Secretary Harlan because of the unsavory reputation of his book. At once appointed to the attorney general's office he rather gained by the experience because his eloquent friend William Douglas O'Connor, in his fiery pamphlet *The Good Gray Poet* (1866), published a fine vindication of Whitman's work.

The poet held his position in Washington until 1874, and during that time published, again at his own expense, two more editions of *Leaves of Grass*. In 1873, at fifty-four, he suffered

a severe stroke of paralysis, and soon was an invalid at the home of his brother George in Camden, New Jersey. He never again recovered his full vitality, although he was well enough, on occasion, to give a public reading or lecture nearby, or to visit Burroughs, now an established naturalist, at his Hudson River farm. In 1879 he made his long-anticipated transcontinental journey, as far west as Nevada.

In 1881 *Leaves of Grass* found a publisher in Osgood and Company of Boston, but threatened action by Comstock's self-appointed censors caused the withdrawal of the edition. Whitman took the plates to Rees Welsh, later David McKay, in Philadelphia, where his works were published for many years thereafter. In 1882 he published his best prose essays as *Specimen Days and Collect*. For the first time his volumes had a considerable sale. He was able to buy his own little house, now famous, in Mickle Street, Camden, and in the last decade of his life it became a place of pilgrimage for many American and British visitors. Until his death in 1892 he was never far from the edge of poverty, but as he said, in his own time he had "really arrived."

The 1892 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which he signed on his deathbed, is one of America's great books, and it has had world-wide influence.

Whitman's writings were collected as *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*, 10 vols., edited by R. M. Bucke and others, 1902, a limited edition long out of print. There are many editions of *Leaves of Grass*. A standard text is *Leaves of Grass*, inclusive edition, edited by Emory Holloway, 1924, 1954, with prefaces by Whitman and the variorum readings by O. L. Triggs from the *Complete Writings*. A new definitive edition of Whitman, general editors Sculley Bradley and Gay W. Allen, is in progress. Vols. I and II contain the correspondence of 1842-1867 and 1867-1875.

Gay W. Allen, *Walt Whitman Handbook*, 1946, is an indispensable aid, and includes excellent bibliographies. A penetrating study of Whitman is F. O. Matthiessen, "Whitman," in his *American Renaissance*, 1941, pp. 517-613. Henry S. Canby, *Walt Whitman, An American*, 1943, is a standard biography. Emory Holloway, *Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative*, 1926, was the earliest modern authority. Frederik Schyberg, *Walt Whitman*, translated by Evie Allen, edited by Gay W. Allen, 1951, presents a thorough account of the growth and development of *Leaves of Grass* through its various editions. The most comprehensive biography is Gay W. Allen, *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman*, 1955. Biography and criticism are balanced in Roger Asselineau, *L'Evolution de Walt Whitman* \* \* \*, 1954.

The following Whitman texts are from *Leaves of Grass*, Philadelphia, 1892, and *Complete Poems and Prose of Walt Whitman, 1855-1888*, Philadelphia, 1888.

## From Preface to the 1855 Edition of *Leaves of Grass*<sup>1</sup>

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient. The preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1855) was not reprinted in subsequent editions, but its ideas, even some of the expressions, were worked into a poem, "Many in One" (1856), which Whitman amplified and altered in successive editions until

that of 1871, where it was entitled "By Blue Ontario's Shore." The poet's concept of individualism, his realization of the threat to the democratic individual in America, which reached a crisis with the Civil War, and the idea of universal brotherhood are embodied in this poem.

tient as has been supposed that the slough<sup>2</sup> still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates herocs. . . . Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and open-handedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not

2. Dead tissue; also mire or muck.



they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it. \* \* \*

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, freetrade, intertravel by land and sea . . . nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. \* \* \*

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulations . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvellous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftiness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals, fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes . . . but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects . . . they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough . . . probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of

healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive . . . some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatneses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough . . . the fact will prevail through the universe . . . but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is always ready plowed and manured . . . others may not know it but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . . . and shall master all attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure

dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport<sup>3</sup> with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene of the winter-woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . . . he is sure . . . he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of all perfection and beauty. \* \* \*

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . . he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . . by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterwards for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all

3. In harmonious relation; properly, *en rapport*.

subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the graygull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddling, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or sooth I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me. \* \* \*

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance. America prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite . . . they are not unappreciated . . . they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work. No disguise can pass on it . . . no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.

# Song of Myself<sup>4</sup>

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
 And what I assume you shall assume,  
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
 I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass. 5

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,  
 Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their  
 parents the same,  
 I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
 Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance, 10  
 Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,  
 I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,  
 Nature without check with original energy.

2  
 Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with  
 perfumes,  
 I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it, 15  
 The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation,  
 it is odorless,  
 It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
 I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and  
 naked,  
 I am mad for it to be in contact with me. 20

The smoke of my own breath,  
 Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and  
 vine,  
 My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing  
 of blood and air through my lungs,  
 The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-  
 color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,  
 The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of  
 the wind, 25  
 A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,

4. This poem was untitled in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*; in the second edition it was called "Poem of Walt Whitman, an American"; and finally,

in 1881-1882, it became "Song of Myself." The "I" or "myself" in the poem, though sometimes personal, is more often generic and cosmic.

The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,  
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and  
hill-sides,

The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from  
bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the  
earth much? 30

Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of  
all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions  
of suns left,)

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look  
through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in  
books, 35

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

## 3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning  
and the end,

But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now, 40  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world. 45  
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and  
increase, always sex,

Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied,  
braced in the beams,

Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical, 50  
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my  
soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age, 55  
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they  
discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty  
and clean,  
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less  
familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;  
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the  
night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy  
tread, 60  
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house  
with their plenty,  
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my  
eyes,  
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,  
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,  
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is  
ahead? 65

4

Trippers and askers surround me,  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and  
city I live in, or the nation,  
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and  
new,  
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,  
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love, 70  
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss or  
lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,  
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the  
fitful events;  
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am, 75  
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,  
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,  
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,  
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with  
linguists and contenders, 80  
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

## 5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,  
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,  
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not  
even the best, 85  
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,  
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over  
upon me,  
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue  
to my bare-stript heart,  
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my  
feet. 90

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that  
pass all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women  
my sisters and lovers,  
And that a kelson of the creation is love, 95  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein  
and poke-weed.

## 6 ✓

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands,  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more  
than he. 100

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green  
stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see  
and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the veg-  
tation. 105

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,  
Growing among black folks as among white,



Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff,<sup>5</sup> I give them the same, I  
receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves. 110

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out  
of their mothers' laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps. 115

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,  
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.  
O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for  
nothing. 120

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and  
women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken  
soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere, 125  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the  
end to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses, 130  
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

7  
Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?  
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.  
I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe,  
and am not contain'd between my hat and boots,  
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good,  
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good. 135

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,  
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and  
fathomless as myself,  
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

5. "Kanuck" denotes a French Canadian; "Tuckahoe," a Virginian who lived on poor lands in the tidewater region and ate tuckahoe, a fungus; and "Cuff," a Negro.

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and female,  
 For me those that have been boys and that love women, 140  
 For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,  
 For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the  
     mothers of mothers,  
 For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,  
 For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded, 145  
 I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,  
 And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be  
     shaken away.

## 8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
 I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies  
     with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy  
     hill, 150  
 I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
 I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has  
     fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the  
     promenaders,  
 The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the  
     clank of the shod horses on the granite floor, 155  
 The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,  
 The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,  
 The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hos-  
     pital,

The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,  
 The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his  
     passage to the centre of the crowd, 160

The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,  
 What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,  
 What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and  
     give birth to babes,

What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls  
     restrain'd by decorum,

Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, re-  
     jections with convex lips, 165

I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I  
     depart.

9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,  
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon,  
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged,  
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow. 170

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,  
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,  
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy,  
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt, 175  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,  
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by my  
side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle and  
scud, 180  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joyously from  
the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a good time;  
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west, the  
bride was a red girl, 185

Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly smok-  
ing, they had moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets  
hanging from their shoulders,

On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins, his  
luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held his bride  
by the hand,

She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight locks  
descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile, 190  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and  
weak,

And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,  
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruised  
feet,

And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him  
some coarse clean clothes,

And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,  
 And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and  
 ankles;

196

He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north,  
 I had him sit next to me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

11

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
 Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;  
 Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

200

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
 She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
 Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

205

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
 You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth  
 bather,

The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their  
 long hair,

210

Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
 It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the  
 sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to them,

They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bend-  
 ing arch,

215

They do not think whom they souse with spray.

12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his knife at  
 the stall in the market,

I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle<sup>6</sup> and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,  
 Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat in the  
 fire.

220

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,  
 The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms,  
 Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so sure,  
 They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

6. A lazy dance, with sliding and tapping of the feet; a break-down is a rollicking, noisy dance.

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags  
underneath on its tied-over chain, 225

The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall  
he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,

His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over  
his hip-band,

His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat  
away from his forehead,

The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of  
his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop  
there, 230

I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well as for-  
ward sluing,

To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what  
is that you express in your eyes? 235

It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and  
day-long ramble,

They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,

And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me, 240

And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something  
else,

And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty  
well to me,

And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night, 245

Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,

The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,

Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the  
chickadee, the prairie-dog,

The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats, 250

The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,

I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors, 255  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and  
mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns, 260  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

## 15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles  
its wild ascending lisp, 265  
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving  
dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are  
ready,  
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar, 270  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big  
wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day<sup>7</sup> loafe and  
looks at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's  
bedroom;)  
The jour printer<sup>8</sup> with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his  
case, 275  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manu-  
script;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;  
The quadron girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by  
the bar-room stove,  
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the  
gate-keeper marks who pass, 280

7. Quaker designation for Sunday.

8. Colloquial for journeyman printer,  
i.e., one who has learned his trade but

is not yet a master printer. His "case"  
is the box that holds his type.

The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do  
 not know him;)  
 The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,  
 The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on  
 their rifles, some sit on logs,  
 Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels  
 his piece;  
 The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee, <sup>285</sup>  
 As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them  
 from his saddle,  
 The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their part-  
 ners, the dancers bow to each other,  
 The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the  
 musical rain,  
 The Wolverine<sup>9</sup> sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,  
 The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins  
 and bead-bags for sale, <sup>290</sup>  
 The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut  
 eyes bent sideways,  
 As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for  
 the shore-going passengers,  
 The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it  
 off in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots,  
 The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne  
 her first child.  
 The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in  
 the factory or mill, <sup>295</sup>  
 The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's  
 lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering  
 with blue and gold,  
 The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his  
 desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,  
 The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow  
 him,  
 The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,  
 The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white  
 sails sparkle!) <sup>300</sup>  
 The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,  
 The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling  
 about the odd cent;)  
 The bride unrumple her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock  
 moves slowly,  
 The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,

The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and  
pimpled neck,

The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to  
each other,

(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)

The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great  
Secretaries,

On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined  
arms,

The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the  
hold,

The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,

As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the  
jingling of loose change,

The floor-men are laying the floor, the tinner are tinning the roof,  
the masons are calling for mortar,

In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers;

Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is  
the fourth of Seventh-month,<sup>1</sup> (what salutes of cannon and  
small arms!)

Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower  
mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground;

Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the  
frozen surface,

The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep  
with his axe,

Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or pecan-  
trees,

Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through  
those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the  
Arkansas,

Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Alta-  
mahaw,

Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-grandsons  
around them,

In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after  
their day's sport,

The city sleeps and the country sleeps,

The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,

The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by  
his wife;

1. Fourth of July. Such Quaker designations for months and days of the week avoided the pagan implications of the more usual names ("July," e.g., is derived from Caesar's first name, Julius).



And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,  
 And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
 And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise, 330  
 Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
 Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,  
 Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff that is  
 fine,

One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same and the  
 largest the same,

A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant and hos-  
 pitable down by the Oconee I live, 335

A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the limber-  
 est joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth,

A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-skin  
 leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,

A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier, Badger,  
 Buckeye;<sup>2</sup>

At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with fisher-  
 men off Newfoundland,

At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest and tack-  
 ing, 340

At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine, or the  
 Texan ranch,

Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Westerners, (lov-  
 ing their big proportions,)

Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake hands  
 and welcome to drink and meat,

A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,  
 A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons, 345

Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,

A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,

Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist any thing better than my own diversity,

Breathe the air but leave plenty after me, 350

And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place, ,

The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in their  
 place,

The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place.)

2. Nicknames for people from Indiana, Wisconsin, and Ohio, respectively.

## 17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they  
 are not original with me, 355  
 If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to  
 nothing,  
 If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are  
 nothing,  
 If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing.  
 This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,  
 This is the common air that bathes the globe. 360

## 18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,  
 I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for  
 conquer'd and slain persons.  
 Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?  
 I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in which  
 they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead, 365  
 I blow through my embouchures<sup>3</sup> my loudest and gayest for them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd!  
 And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!  
 And to those themselves who sank in the sea!  
 And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!  
 And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes  
 known! 371

## 19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,  
 It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appoint-  
 ments with all,  
 I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
 The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited, 375  
 The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venercalee is invited;  
 There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of hair,  
 This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning,  
 This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face, 380  
 This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?  
 Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on  
 the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?  
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering  
through the woods? 385  
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,  
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;  
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat? 390

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,  
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,  
'That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and filth. 395

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids, conform-  
ity goes to the fourth-remov'd,  
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd with  
doctors and calculated close,  
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones. 400

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,  
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,  
'To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,  
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means. 405

I know I am ~~deathless~~,  
I know ~~this~~ orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a burnt stick  
at night.

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood, 410  
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by,  
after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,  
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,  
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself,  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or ten  
million years,

I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,<sup>4</sup>

I laugh at what you call dissolution,

And I know the amplitude of time.

420

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,

The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with  
me,

The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into  
a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,

And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,

And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

425

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,

We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,

I show that size is only development.

430

I have you outstript the rest? are you the President?

It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and still pass  
on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,

I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic nourishing  
night!

435

Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!

Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!

Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!

Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!

440

Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!

Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!

Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!

Smile, for your lover comes.

445

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!

O unspeakable passionate love.

4. The tenon-and-mortise joint is noted for strength.

22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,  
 I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,  
 I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me, 450  
 We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of sight of  
 the land,

Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,  
 Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,  
 Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths, 455  
 Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready graves,

Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,  
 I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of hate and conciliation,  
 Extoller of amics and those that sleep in each others' arms. 460

I am he attesting sympathy,  
 (Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house that  
 supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet  
 of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?  
 Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent,  
 My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait; 466  
 I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?  
 Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and  
 rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance, 470  
 Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,  
 Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start.

'This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,  
 There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not such a  
 wonder, 475  
 The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or  
 an infidel.

23

Endless unfolding of words of ages!  
 And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,  
 Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time abso-  
 lutely. 480

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all,  
 That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
 Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration! 485  
 I fetch stonecrop<sup>5</sup> mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,  
 This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar of  
 the old cartouches,  
 These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,  
 This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a mathe-  
 matician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always! 490  
 Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,  
 I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,  
 And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom and  
 extrication,  
 And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor men and  
 women fully equipt. 495  
 And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and them that  
 plot and conspire.

## 24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos,<sup>6</sup> of Manhattan the son,  
 Turbulent, fleshly, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,  
 No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from  
 them,  
 No more modest than immodest. 500

Unscrew the locks from the doors!  
 Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
 And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the cur-  
 rent and index. 505

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,

5. A mosslike plant with yellow flowers,  
 frequently found on rocks and walls.

6. German transcendental idealism,

which influenced Whitman, stressed the  
 relations between the individual micro-  
 cosm and the universal macrocosm.

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counter-  
part of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,  
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs, 510  
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the  
father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung. 515

Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,  
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,  
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart,  
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is. 521

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,  
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is  
a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or  
am touch'd from,  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer, 525  
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of  
my own body, or any part of it,  
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!  
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!  
Firm masculine colter<sup>7</sup> it shall be you! 530  
Whatever goes to the tilth<sup>8</sup> of me it shall be you!  
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of my life!  
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!  
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!  
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of guarded  
duplicate eggs! it shall be you! 535  
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!  
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!  
Suns so generous it shall be you!  
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!

7. Sharp blade attached to a plow to cut the ground in advance of the plow-share.

8. Act of cultivation or tillage of the soil.

You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you! 540  
 Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be you!  
 Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounge in my  
 winding paths, it shall be you!  
 Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever touch'd,  
 it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,  
 Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy, 545  
 I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faint-  
 est wish,  
 Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the friend-  
 ship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,  
 A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the meta-  
 physics of books.

To behold the day-break! 550  
 The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,  
 The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising,  
 freshly exuding,  
 Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs, 555  
 Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their junction,  
 The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head,  
 The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me, 560  
 If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
 We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
 With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of  
 worlds. 565

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,  
 It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
*Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?*

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articu-  
 lation,  
 Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are folded?



Waiting in gloom, protected by frost, 571  
 The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,  
 I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
 My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the meaning of  
 all things,  
 Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out in  
 search of this day.) 575

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I really  
 am,  
 Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
 I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,  
 I carry the plenum<sup>9</sup> of proof and every thing else in my face, 580  
 With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

26

Now I will do nothing but listen,  
 To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute  
 toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames,  
 clack of sticks cooking my meals.

I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice, 585  
 I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,  
 Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and  
 night,

Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh of  
 work-people at their meals,

The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of the sick,  
 The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pronouncing  
 a death-sentence, 590

The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves, the re-  
 frain of the anchor-lifters,

The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-streaking  
 engines and hose-carts with premonitory tinkles and color'd  
 lights,

The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching cars,  
 The slow march play'd at the head of the association marching two  
 and two,

(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with black  
 muslin.) 595

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's complaint,)  
 I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my ears,  
 It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,  
Ah this indeed is music—this suits me.

600

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)  
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus<sup>1</sup> flies,  
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them,  
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent  
waves,

606

I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,  
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes<sup>2</sup> of  
death,

At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
And that we call Being.

610

27

To be in any form, what is that?  
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,)  
If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug<sup>3</sup> in its callous shell were  
enough.

Mine is no callous shell,  
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,  
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

615

I mercly stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,  
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can  
stand.

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,  
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,  
Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly  
different from myself,

620

On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,  
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,  
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,  
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,  
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,  
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-  
fields,

625

Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,

1. The seventh major planet; in Greek mythology the personification of Heaven.

2. A nautical term for the windings of a coiled cable or hawser.

3. An edible Atlantic-coast clam.

They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the edges  
of me, 630

No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger,  
Fetch the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,  
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.  
The sentries desert every other part of me,  
They have left me helpless to a red marauder, 635  
They all come to the headland to witness and assist against me.

I am given up by traitors,  
I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am the greatest  
traitor,  
I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me  
there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight in its  
throat, 640  
Uncle the floodgates, you are too much for me.

29  
Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd touch!  
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual loan,  
Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward. 645

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and vital,  
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

30  
All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon, 650  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.  
(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so, 655  
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,  
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for each  
other, 660  
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it be-  
comes omnific,  
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

## 31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,  
And the pismire<sup>4</sup> is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg  
of the wren,

And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest, 665  
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains,  
esculent roots, 670

And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,  
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,  
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my approach,  
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones, 676  
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,  
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters lying  
low,

In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,  
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs, 680  
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,  
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,  
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

## 32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and  
self-contain'd,

I stand and look at them long and long. 685

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of  
owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of  
years ago, 690

Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their  
possession.

4. An ant.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them? 695

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,  
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers,  
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on brotherly  
terms. 700

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses.  
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut, flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him, 705  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around and  
return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?  
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

33

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at, 710  
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,  
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,  
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the morn-  
ing.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents, 715  
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with lum-  
bermen,  
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet bed,  
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips,  
crossing savannas, trailing in forests,  
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase, 720  
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down the  
shallow river,  
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the  
buck turns furiously at the hunter,  
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the  
otter is feeding on fish,

Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,  
 Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the  
     beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail; 725  
 Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant, over  
     the rice in its low moist field,  
 Over the sharp-peak'd farmhouse, with its scallop'd scum and slender  
     shoots from the gutters,  
 Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over the  
     delicate blue-flower flax,  
 Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there  
     with the rest,  
 Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the  
     breeze; 730  
 Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on by low  
     scragged limbs,  
 Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the leaves of  
     the brush,  
 Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat-lot,  
 Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the great gold-  
     bug drops through the dark,  
 Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and flows to  
     the meadow, 735  
 Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shud-  
     dering of their hides,  
 Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons strad-  
     dle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons from the  
     rafters;  
 Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its cylin-  
     ders,  
 Where the human heart beats with terrible throes under its ribs,  
 Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it my-  
     self and looking composedly down,) 740  
 Where the life-car<sup>5</sup> is drawn on the slip-noose, where the heat  
     hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,  
 Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it,  
 Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of smoke,  
 Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the water,  
 Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents, 745  
 Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are corrupting  
     below;  
 Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the regiments,  
 Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,  
 Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance,  
 5. Watertight vessel moved by ropes to rescue people from wrecked ships.

Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood outside, 750  
 Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good game of  
 base-ball,  
 At he-festivals, with blackguard jibes, ironical license, bull-dances,<sup>6</sup>  
 drinking, laughter,  
 At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash, sucking the  
 juice through a straw,  
 At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,  
 At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-raising;  
 Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles,  
 screams, weeps, 756  
 Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-stalks are  
 scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits in the hovel,  
 Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the stud  
 to the mare, where the cock is treading the hen,  
 Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with short  
 jerks,  
 Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and lonesome  
 prairie, 760  
 Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles  
 far and near,  
 Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the long-  
 lived swan is curving and winding,  
 Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs her  
 near-human laugh,  
 Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid by  
 the high weeds,  
 Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground with  
 their heads out, 765  
 Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,  
 Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icied trees,  
 Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at  
 night and feeds upon small crabs,  
 Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon,  
 Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree  
 over the well, 770  
 Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired leaves,  
 Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,  
 Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon, through the  
 office or public hall;  
 Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd with  
 the new and old,  
 Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome, 775

6. Slang, derived from "buffalo dance," originally danced by Indians.

Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks  
 melodiously,  
 Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,  
 Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher,  
 impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting;  
 Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole forenoon,  
 flatt'g the flesh of my nose on the thick plate glass,  
 Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the  
 clouds, or down a lane or along the beach, 780  
 My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in the  
 middle;  
 Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy, (behind  
 me he rides at the drape of the day,)  
 Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet, or the  
 moccasin print,  
 By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish patient,  
 Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a candle;  
 Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure, 786  
 Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,  
 Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,  
 Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a  
 long while,  
 Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle God by my  
 side, 790  
 Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the stars,  
 Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the  
 diameter of eighty thousand miles,  
 Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the rest,  
 Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in its  
 belly,  
 Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning, 795  
 Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,  
 I tread day and night such roads.  
 I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,  
 And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions green.  
 I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul, 800  
 My course runs below the soundings of plummets.  
 I help myself to material and immaterial,  
 No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.  
 I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
 My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns to  
 me. 805



I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with a pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,  
 I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,  
 We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
 Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the wonderful  
 beauty, 810  
 The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the scenery is  
 plain in all directions,  
 The white-topped mountains show in the distance, I fling out my  
 fancies toward them,  
 We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are soon to  
 be engaged,  
 We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass with still  
 feet and caution,  
 Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city, 815  
 The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living cities of  
 the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,  
 I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride myself,  
 I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the stairs, 820  
 They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
 The courage of present times and all times,  
 How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the  
 steamship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm,  
 How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was faithful  
 of days and faithful of nights, 825  
 And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer, we will  
 not desert you;*  
 How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days and  
 would not give it up,  
 How he saved the drifting company at last,  
 How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the  
 side of their prepared graves,  
 How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the sharp-  
 lipp'd unshaved men; 830  
 All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine,  
 I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.  
 The disdain and calmness of martyrs,

The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry wood,  
 her children gazing on,  
 The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat, 835  
 The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the murderous  
 buckshot and the bullets,  
 All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
 Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen,  
 I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze  
 of my skin. 840

I fall on the weeds and stones,  
 The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
 Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with  
 whipstocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments.  
 I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the  
 wounded person, 845  
 My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,  
 Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,  
 Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my  
 comrades,  
 I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels, 850  
 They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is for my  
 sake,  
 Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,  
 White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads are bared of  
 their fire-caps,  
 The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches. 855

Distant and dead resuscitate,  
 They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am the clock  
 myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
 I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers, 860  
 Again the attacking cannon, mortars,  
 Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
 The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
 The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip, 865  
 Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable repairs,  
 The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped explosion,  
 The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously waves  
 with his hand,  
 He gasps through the clot *Mind not me—mind—the entrench-*  
*ments.* 870

34

Now I tell what I know in Texas in my early youth,  
 (I tell not the fall of Alamo,<sup>7</sup>  
 Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,  
 The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)  
 'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and  
 twelve young men.<sup>8</sup> 875

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their baggage  
 for breastworks,  
 Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times their  
 number, was the price they took in advance,  
 Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,  
 They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and  
 seal, gave up their arms and march'd back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers, 880  
 Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
 Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,  
 Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
 Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day<sup>9</sup> morning they were brought out in squads and  
 massacred, it was beautiful early summer, 885  
 The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,  
 Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and straight,  
 A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead  
 lay together,

7. A mission converted into a fort at San Antonio, where the Texas garrison of 180 was annihilated by four thousand Mexicans (March 6, 1836).  
 8. The massacre of Colonel James W.

Fannin and his troops at Goliad on March 27, 1836. "Goliad" like "the Alamo" became a rallying cry for Texans in their fight for independence.  
 9. Quaker term for Sunday.

The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw them  
there, 890

Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,  
'These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts of  
muskets.

A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more  
came to release him,

The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies; 895

That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young  
men.

## 35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?

Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?

List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor told it to  
me.<sup>1</sup>

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,) 900

His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer,  
and never was, and never will be;

Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon touch'd,

My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water, 905

On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first fire,  
killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,

Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on the gain,  
and five feet of water reported,

The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the after-hold  
to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the sen-  
tinels, 910

They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire,

The other asks if we demand quarter?

If our colors are struck and the fighting done?

1. The victory of John Paul Jones, commanding the *Bonhomme Richard*, over the British frigate *Serapis* in the

North Sea during the American Revolution (September 23, 1779).

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain, 915  
*We have not struck*, he composedly cries, *we have just begun our*  
*part of the fighting.*

Only three guns are in use,  
 One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's main-  
 mast,  
 'Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry and  
 clear his decks.

'The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially the  
 main-top, 920  
 'They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,  
 'The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the powder-  
 magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally thought we  
 are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain, 925  
 He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,  
 His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

'Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they surrender to us.

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,  
 'Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness, 930  
 Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass to the  
 one we have conquer'd,

The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders through  
 a countenance white as a sheet,

Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,

'The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully  
 curl'd whiskers,

'The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and below,

The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty, 936

'Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of flesh  
 upon the masts and spars,

Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe of  
 waves,

Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong scent,

A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining, 940

Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by the

shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,  
 The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,  
 Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long,  
 dull, tapering groan,  
 These so, these irretrievable.

## 37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms! 945  
 In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!  
 Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,  
 See myself in prison shaped like another man.  
 And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep  
 watch. 950  
 It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd to him  
 and walk by his side,  
 (I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with sweat  
 on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and am tried  
 and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at the last  
 gasp, 955  
 My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me people  
 retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them,  
 I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

## 38

Enough! enough! enough!  
 Some how I have been stunn'd. Stand back! 960  
 Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers, dreams,  
 gaping,  
 I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!  
 That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the bludge-  
 ons and hammers!  
 That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion and  
 bloody crowning! 965

I remember now,  
I resume the overstaid fraction,  
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or to any  
    graves,  
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an average  
    unending procession, 970  
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,  
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,  
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of years.

Eleves,<sup>2</sup> I salute you! come forward!  
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings. 975

39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?  
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?  
Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?  
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?  
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea? 980

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,  
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them, stay  
    with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncomb'd  
    head, laughter, and naiveté,  
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and emanations,  
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers, 985  
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly out of  
    the glance of his eyes.

40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!  
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,  
Say, old top-knot, what do you want? 990

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,  
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but cannot,  
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights and days.

2. Pupils or disciples.

868 • *Walt Whitman*

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give I give myself.

995

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,  
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,  
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,  
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and to spare,  
And any thing I have I bestow.

1000

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,  
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,  
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,  
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

1005

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes,  
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door,  
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,  
Let the physician and the priest go home.

1010

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,  
O despairer, here is my neck,  
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,  
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,  
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

1015

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,  
Not doubt, not disease shall dare to lay finger upon you,  
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,  
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you is

so.

1020

41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,  
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,  
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;  
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

1025



Magnifying and applying come I,  
 Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,<sup>3</sup>  
 Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,  
 Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,  
 Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha, 1030  
 In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix  
 engraved,  
 With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and  
 image,<sup>4</sup>  
 Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,  
 Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,  
 ('They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise and  
 fly and sing for themselves,') 1035  
 Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself, be-  
 stowing them freely on each man and woman I see,  
 Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,  
 Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves driv-  
 ing the mallet and chisel,  
 Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke or  
 a hair on the back of my hand just as curious as any revelation,  
 Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me  
 than the gods of the antique wars, 1040  
 Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,  
 Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their white fore-  
 heads whole and unhurt out of the flames;  
 By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding for  
 every person born,  
 Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels  
 with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
 The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to  
 come, 1045  
 Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his  
 brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery;  
 What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod about me,  
 and not filling the square rod then,  
 The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,  
 Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,  
 The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be one  
 of the supremes, 1050  
 The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the

3. Contemptuous term for broker or middleman.

4. Whitman hoped for a universal religion, embracing aspects of all faiths. In these lines he has listed deities from various religions and mythologies: He-

braic (Jehovah), Greek (Kronos, Zeus, Hercules), Egyptian (Osiris, Isis), Babylonian (Belus), Hindu (Brahma), Buddhist (Buddha), American Indian (Manito), Islamic (Allah), Norse (Odin), and Aztec (Mexitli).

best, and be as prodigious;  
 By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,  
 Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the  
 shadows.

## 42

A call in the midst of the crowd,  
 My own voice, orotund sweeping and final. 1055

Come my children,  
 Come my boys and girls, my women, household and intimates,  
 Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his prelude on  
 the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of your climax  
 and close.

My head slues round on my neck, 1060  
 Music rolls, but not from the organ,  
 Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,  
 Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward sun,  
     ever the air and the ceaseless tides,  
 Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real, 1065  
 Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb, that  
     breath of itches and thirsts,  
 Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one hides and  
     bring him forth,  
 Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,  
 Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking, 1070  
 To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,  
 Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going,  
 Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for pay-  
     ment receiving,  
 A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens, 1075  
 Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets,  
     newspapers, schools,  
 The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories, stocks,  
     stores, real estate and personal estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats,

I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or fleas,) I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and shallowest is deathless with me, 1080

What I do and say the same waits for them,  
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,  
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,  
And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself. 1085

Not words of routine this song of mine,  
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;  
This printed and bound book—but the printer and the printing-office boy?

The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close and solid in your arms?

The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets—but the pluck of the captain and engineers? 1090

In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host and hostess, and the look out of their eyes?

The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?

The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?

Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,  
And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life? 1095

43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,  
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,  
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern,

Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,

Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,  
Making a fetish of the first rock or stump, powowing with sticks in the circle of obis, 1101

Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,  
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,

Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas<sup>5</sup> admirant,  
minding the Koran,

5. Shastas (properly "shastras") are the books of instructions, the Vedas the most ancient sacred writings, of Hindu religion.

Walking the teokallis,<sup>6</sup> spotted with gore from the stone and knife,  
 beating the serpent-skin drum, 1105  
 Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing  
 assuredly that he is divine,  
 To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting  
 patiently in a pew,  
 Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till  
 my spirit arouses me,  
 Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and  
 land,  
 Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits. 1110

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk like a  
 man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
 Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd, atheistical,  
 I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair  
 and unbelief.

How the flukes splash! 1115  
 How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts of  
 blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,  
 I take my place among you as much as among any,  
 The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,  
 And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all precisely  
 the same. 1120

I do not know what is untried and afterward,  
 But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail.

Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd, not a  
 single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who'died and was buried,  
 Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side, 1125  
 Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew back  
 and was never seen again,  
 Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it with  
 bitterness worse than gall,

6. Teocallis, ancient Aztec temples situated on terraced pyramids, up which the human sacrifices climbed to their doom.

Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the bad disorder,  
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish koboo<sup>7</sup>  
    call'd the ordure of humanity, 1129  
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in,  
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the  
    earth,  
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of  
    myriads that inhibit them,  
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away, 1135  
I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,  
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety, 1140  
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my  
    sister?

I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me, 1145  
All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation,  
(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to  
    be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the  
    steps, 1150  
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,

I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon. 1155

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings, 1160  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on, 1165  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it  
with care.<sup>8</sup>

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

## 45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity. 1170  
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.

My lovers suffocate me,  
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at  
night,  
Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging and chirp-  
ing over my head, 1175  
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,  
Lighting on every moment of my life,  
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,  
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving them to  
be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying days!

8. *I.e.*, "Sauria"; mammoth reptiles, snakes carry their eggs in their mouths generally prehistoric. The idea that occurs in folklore.

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows  
after and out of itself, 1181  
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,  
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of  
the farther systems.  
Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding, 1185  
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage, 1190  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces,  
were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not  
avail in the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not  
hazard the span or make it impatient,  
They are but parts, any thing is but a part. 1195

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,  
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there.

46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured  
and never will be measured. 1201

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the  
woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy, 1205  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,  
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public  
road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you, 1210  
 You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
 Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,  
 Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds<sup>9</sup> dear son, and I will mine, and let us hasten  
 forth, 1215  
 Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your hand  
 on my hip,  
 And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
 I'or after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded  
 heaven, 1220  
 And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of those orbs,  
 and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall  
 we be fill'd and satisfied then?*  
 And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and continue  
 beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
 I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while dear son, 1225  
 Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,  
 But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I kiss  
 you with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
 Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
 You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every mo-  
 ment of your life. 1230

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
 Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
 To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout,  
 and laughingly dash with your hair.

## 47

I am the teacher of athletes,  
 He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width  
 of my own, 1235  
 He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.

9. A slang term for clothes.



The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived power,  
but in his own right,

Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,

Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,

Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel cuts,  
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff, to sing  
a song or play on the banjo, 1241

Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-pox over  
all latherers,

And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?

I follow you whoever you are from the present hour, 1245

My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time while I  
wait for a boat,

(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you,  
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a house, 1250

And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her  
who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,

The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a  
key,

The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me, 1255

But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,

The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me  
with him all day,

The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my  
voice,

In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen  
and love them. 1260

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,

On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do not fail  
them,

On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know me seek  
me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in his  
blanket,

The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his wagon, 1265

The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
 The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where  
 they are,  
 They and all would resume what I have told them.

48 ✓

(I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
 And I have said that the body is not more than the soul, 1270  
 And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is, )  
 And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own  
 funeral drest in his shroud,  
 And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the  
 earth,  
 And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the  
 learning of all times,  
 And there is no trade or employment but the young man following  
 it may become a hero, 1275  
 And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd  
 universe,  
 And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and com-  
 posed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
 For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,  
 (No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and  
 about death.) 1280

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in  
 the least,  
 Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
 I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each  
 moment then,  
 In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in  
 the glass, 1285  
 I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by  
 God's name,  
 And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go  
 Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to  
 try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur<sup>1</sup> comes, 1290  
 I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,

1. Obstetrician, midwife.

I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,  
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does  
not offend me,

I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing. 1295  
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,  
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,  
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and promotions,  
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing? 1301

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,  
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that decay  
in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs. 1305

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or  
small.

50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in  
me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes, 1310  
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me. 1315

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers and  
sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?

It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—  
it is Happiness.

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future. 1320

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,

(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself,

1325

(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.

1331

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,

It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,

1335

It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

1340

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,

Missing me one place search another,

1345

I stop somewhere waiting for you.

1855, 1881-1882

### From CHILDREN OF ADAM

#### Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd

Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,  
Whispering *I love you, before long I die,*  
*I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you to touch you,*  
*For I could not die till I once look'd on you,*  
*For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.*

5

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,  
Return in peace to the ocean my love,  
I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much separated,  
Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!  
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us, 10  
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us diverse forever;  
Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air, the  
ocean and the land,  
Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.

1865, 1867

### Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City

Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for  
future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions,  
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman<sup>1</sup> I casually met  
there who detain'd me for love of me,  
Day by day and night by night we were together—all else has long  
been forgotten by me,  
I remember I say only that woman who passionately clung to me,  
Again we wander, we love, we separate again, 5  
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,  
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.

1860, 1867

### Facing West from California's Shores

Facing west from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity,<sup>2</sup> the  
land of migrations, look afar,  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost circled;  
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere, 5  
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the hero,  
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,  
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wander'd,  
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
(But where is what I started for so long ago? 10  
And why is it yet unfound?)

1860, 1867

### As Adam Early in the Morning

As Adam early in the morning,  
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,  
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,

1. An early MS. of this poem shows "man" stricken out and "woman" substituted.

2. Asia interested Whitman as the supposed birthplace of the human race.

Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,  
Be not afraid of my body.

5  
1860, 1867

### *From CALAMUS*<sup>3</sup> For You O Democracy

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
    With the love of comrades,  
    With the life-long love of comrades.

5

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of  
    America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over  
    the prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's  
    necks,  
    By the love of comrades,  
    By the manly love of comrades,

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femmel! 10  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

1860, 1881-1882

### I Saw in Louisiana a Live-oak Growing

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,  
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark  
    green,  
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself,  
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there  
    without its friend near, for I knew I could not, 5  
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and  
    twined around it a little moss,  
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight in my room,  
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,  
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)  
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly  
    love; 10  
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana  
    solitary in a wide flat space,

3. The "Calamus" poems first appeared in the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1860). The calamus, a species of water

reed, sometimes appears in myth and literature, as it does here, as a symbol of male comradeship.

Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,  
I know very well I could not.

1860, 1867

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry<sup>4</sup>

1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also  
face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how  
curious you are to me!

On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning  
home, are more curious to me than you suppose,

And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more  
to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose. 5

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the  
day,

The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every  
one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,

The similitudes of the past and those of the future,

The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings,  
on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,

The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away, 10

The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,

The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to  
shore,

Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,

Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the  
heights of Brooklyn to the south and east, 15

Others will see the islands large and small;

Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half  
an hour high,

A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others  
will see them,

Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-  
back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not, 20

I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so  
many generations hence,

4. First called "Sun-Down Poem" in (1856). This lyric was a favorite with  
the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* Thoreau.

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,  
 Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,  
 Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright  
     flow, I was refresh'd,  
 Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift cur-  
     rent, I stood yet was hurried,  
 Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-  
     stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,  
 Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air  
     floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,  
 Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left  
     the rest in strong shadow,  
 Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the  
     south,  
 Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
 Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,  
 Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of  
     my head in the sunlit water,  
 Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,  
 Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,  
 Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,  
 Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,  
 Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,  
 The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,  
 The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender  
     serpentine pennants,  
 The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-  
     houses,  
 The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the  
     wheels,  
 The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
 The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolic-  
     some crests and glistening,  
 The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the  
     granite storehouses by the docks,  
 On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on  
     each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,  
 On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burn-  
     ing high and glaringly into the night,  
 Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow  
     light over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,  
 I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,



The men and women I saw were all near to me,  
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd  
forward to them,  
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it then between us?

What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us? 55

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails  
not,

I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,

I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the  
waters around it,

I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me.

In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon  
me, 60

In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon  
me,

I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,

I too had receiv'd identity by my body,

That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I  
should be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall, 65

The dark threw its patches down upon me also,

The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,

My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality  
meagre?

Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,

I am he who knew what it was to be evil, 70

I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,

Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stolc, grudg'd,

Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,

Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,

The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me, 75

The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not  
wanting,

Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these  
wanting,

Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,

Was call'd by my highest name by clear loud voices of young men  
as they saw me approaching or passing,

Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of  
their flesh against me as I sat, 80

Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet  
never told them a word,

Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing,  
 sleeping,  
 Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,  
 The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we  
 like,  
 Or as small as we like, or both great and small. 85

## 7

Closer yet I approach you,  
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid  
 in my stores in advance,  
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?  
 Who knows but I am enjoying this? 90  
 Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at  
 you now, for all you cannot see me?

## 8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-  
 hemm'd Manhattan?  
 River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?  
 The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight,  
 and the belated lighter?  
 What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with  
 voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my highest name  
 as I approach? 95

What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man  
 that looks in my face?  
 Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?  
 What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?  
 What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not  
 accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not? 100

## 9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!  
 Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!  
 Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or  
 the men and women generations after me!  
 Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!  
 Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta!<sup>5</sup> stand up, beautiful hills of  
 Brooklyn! 105  
 Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!

5. By using this name for Manhattan Island, Whitman drew attention to its Indian meaning—the dwelling of Man-

ito, the God. He also referred to Long Island by its Indian name, Paumanok.

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public  
assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by  
my highest name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress! <sup>110</sup>  
Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one  
makes it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways  
be looking upon you;

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste  
with the hasting current;

Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the  
air;

Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all  
downcast eyes have time to take it from you! <sup>115</sup>

Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any  
one's head, in the sunlit water!

Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sail'd  
schooners, sloops, lighters!

Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!

Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at night-  
fall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses!

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are, <sup>120</sup>

You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,

About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest  
aromas,

Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and  
sufficient rivers,

Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting. <sup>125</sup>

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate hence-  
forward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves  
from us,

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently  
within us,

We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you  
also, <sup>130</sup>

You furnish your parts toward eternity,

Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

## From SEA-DRIFT

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking<sup>9</sup>

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
 Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
 Out of the Ninth-month<sup>1</sup> midnight,  
 Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving  
     his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,  
 Down from the shower'd halo,  
 Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they  
     were alive,  
 Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,  
 From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
 From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings  
     I heard,  
 From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with  
     tears,  
 From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,  
 From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
 From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
 From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
 From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
 As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
 Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
 A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
 (Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
 I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
 Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,  
 A reminiscence sing.)

Once Paumanok,<sup>2</sup>

When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was  
 growing,

Up this seashore in some briars,

Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,

And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,

And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,

9. "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" became the first poem in a section entitled "Sea-Drift" in the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. In the 1871 edition this section was entitled "Sea-Shore Memories." The sea provided inspiration for Whitman, who in these poems hints at some of the major crises of his life.

1. The Quaker designation for September may here also suggest the human cycle of fertility and birth, in contrast with "sterile sands" in the next line.

2. Whitman liked the Indian name for Long Island; cf. the title "Starting from Paumanok" for a poem dealing with his origins and birthplace.

And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright  
eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing  
them, 30  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine! shine! shine!*  
*Pour down your warmth, great sun!*  
*While we bask, we two together.*

*Two together!* 35  
*Winds blow south, or winds blow north,*  
*Day come white, or night come black,*  
*Home, or rivers and mountains from home,*  
*Singing all time, minding no time,*  
*While we two keep together.*<sup>3</sup> 40

Till of a sudden,  
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,  
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appear'd again. 45

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,  
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird, 50  
The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow! blow! blow!*  
*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;*  
*I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd, 55  
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,  
Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,  
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know. 60

Yes my brother I know,  
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,  
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,

3. The mockingbird songs were altered for rhythmic verisimilitude in several editions subsequent to the magazine publication of 1859. Whitman, himself

an ornithologist, had also the advice of his friend John Burroughs, the talented naturalist.

Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,  
 Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights  
 after their sorts, 65

The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,  
 I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
 Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,  
 Following you my brother. 70

Soothe! soothe! soothe!  
 Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,  
 And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,  
 But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late, 75  
 It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,  
 With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?  
 What is that little black thing I see there in the white? 80

Loud! loud! loud!  
 Loud I call to you, my love!  
 High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,  
 Surely you must know who is here, is here,  
 You must know who I am, my love. 85

Low-hanging moon!  
 What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?  
 O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!  
 O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land! 90  
 Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back  
 again if you only would,  
 For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!  
 Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat! 95  
 Sound clearer through the atmosphere!  
 Pierce the woods, the earth,  
 Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!  
 Solitary here, the night's carols! 100

*Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!*  
*Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!*  
*O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!*  
*O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft! sink low!* 105  
*Soft! let me just murmur,*  
*And do you wait a moment you husky-voiced sea,*  
*For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,*  
*So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,*  
*But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to*  
*me.* 110

*Hither my love!*  
*Here I am! here!*  
*With this just-sustained note I announce myself to you,*  
*This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoyed elsewhere,* 115  
*That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,*  
*That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,*  
*Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!*  
*O I am very sick and sorrowful.* 120

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!*  
*O troubled reflection in the sea!*  
*O throat! O throbbing heart!*  
*And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!* 125  
*In the air, in the woods, over fields,*  
*Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!*  
*But my mate no more, no more with me!*  
*We two together no more.*

*The aria sinking,* 130  
*All else continuing, the stars shining,*  
*The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuously echoing,*  
*With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,*  
*On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,*  
*The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of*  
*the sea almost touching,* 135  
*The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the at-*  
*mosphere dallying,*  
*The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously*  
*bursting,*

The aria's<sup>4</sup> meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,  
 The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,  
 The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering, 140  
 The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,  
 To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret  
     hissing,  
 To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)  
 Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me? 145  
 For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard  
     you,  
 Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,  
 And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and  
     more sorrowful than yours,  
 A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never  
     to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me, 150  
 O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,  
 Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,  
 Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,  
 Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what  
     there in the night,  
 By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon, 155  
 The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,  
 The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)  
 O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

(A word then, (for I will conquer it,) 160  
 The word final, superior to all,  
 Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;  
 Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea waves?  
 Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?)

Whereto answering, the sea, 165  
 Delaying not, hurrying not,  
 Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,  
 Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,  
 And again death, death, death, death,  
 Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's  
     heart, 170  
 But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,

4. Robert Faner in *Whitman and the Opera* (1952) has shown Whitman's indebtedness to opera forms in such poems as this.



Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,  
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother, 175  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The word of the sweetest song and all songs, 180  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,)  
The sea whisper'd me.

1859, 1881-1882

### To the Man-of-War-Bird<sup>5</sup>

Thou who has slept all night upon the storm,  
Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
(Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascended'st,  
And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)  
Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating, 5  
As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
(Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)

Far, far at sea,  
After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with wrecks,  
With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene, 10  
The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
Thou also re-appearest.

Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)  
To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane, 15  
Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces, realms  
gyrating,  
At dusk that look'st on Senegal,<sup>6</sup> at morn America,  
That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-cloud,  
In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul, 20  
What joys! what joys were thine!<sup>7</sup>

1876, 1881-1882

5. This poem is based on a French poem by Jules Michelet; it was one of twenty new poems added in the seventh edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1881-1882).

6. Colony in French West Africa.  
7. Cf. the last stanza of Shelley's "To a Skylark," a poem well known to Whitman.

## From BY THE ROADSIDE Gods

Lover divine and perfect Comrade,  
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving, 8  
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)  
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,  
Be thou my God. 10

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,  
(To break the stagnant tie—thce, thce to free, O soul,)  
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts, 15  
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,  
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,  
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night, 20  
Be ye my Gods.

1870, 1881–1882

## The Dalliance of the Eagles<sup>8</sup>

Skirting the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,)  
Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles,  
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,  
The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel,  
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling, 5  
In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling,  
Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull,  
A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons loosing,  
Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse  
flight,  
She hers, he his, pursuing. 10

1880, 1881–1882

8. This poem was written from an account furnished the poet by John Burroughs. It was included in the seventh

edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1881–1882).

*From* DRUM-TAPS<sup>9</sup>  
Cavalry Crossing a Ford

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,  
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun—hark to  
the musical clank,  
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering stop to  
drink,  
Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a picture, the  
negligent rest on the saddles,  
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering the  
ford—while, 5  
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,  
The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

1865, 1871

*Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night*

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;  
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a look I shall  
never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay on  
the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle, 5  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made my  
way,  
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body son of  
responding kisses, (never again on earth responding,)  
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew the  
moderate night-wind,  
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the battle-  
field spreading,  
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent night, 10  
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I gazed,  
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning my  
chin in my hands,  
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you dearest  
comrade—not a tear, not a word,  
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my soldier,  
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward stole, 15

9. *Drum-Taps* (1865) contained fifty-three poems, some of them written at or near the battle front in Virginia. These poems were later given a central

position in *Leaves of Grass*, as representing a crucial experience of democracy.

Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was your death,  
 I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we shall surely meet again,)  
 Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn appear'd,  
 My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,  
 Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and carefully under feet,  
 And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,  
 Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-field dim,  
 Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding,)  
 Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how as day brighten'd,  
 I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his blanket,  
 And buried him where he fell.

1865, 1867

### A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim

A sight in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,  
 As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
 As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the hospital tent,  
 Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there untended lying,  
 Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen blanket,  
 Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.  
 Curious I halt and silent stand,  
 Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the first just lift the blanket;  
 Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-gray'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
 Who are you my dear comrade?  
 Then to the second I step—and who are you my child and darling?  
 Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?  
 Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory;  
 Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face of the Christ himself,  
 Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

1865, 1867

### Look Down Fair Moon

Look down fair moon and bathe this scene,  
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on faces ghastly, swollen,  
purple,  
On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd wide,  
Pour down your unstinted nimbus sacred moon.

1865, 1867

### Reconciliation

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be  
utterly lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly  
wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;  
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw  
near,  
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the  
coffin.

1865-1866, 1881-1882

### When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd<sup>1</sup>

1

When lilacs<sup>2</sup> last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west, 5  
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!  
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!  
O great star disappear'd—O the black muck that hides the star!  
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me! 10  
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

1. "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is one of four elegies entitled "Memories of President Lincoln," which were added, after Lincoln's death, to later issues of *Drum-Taps* (1865). It is generally regarded as one of Whitman's greatest poems. The bard of American democratic comradeship saw, in the life and death of Lincoln, the

human symbol of his theme, and in the *Drum-Taps* volumes, the keystone of the arch of his *Leaves of Grass*.

2. The lilac, which may be Persian in its origin, had, in Eastern symbolism, a connection with manly love. Other symbols in this poem are the hermit thrush and its song and the evening star. See l. 205.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd  
 palings,  
 Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich  
 green,  
 With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume  
 strong I love,  
 With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard, 15  
 With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,  
 A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,  
 A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,  
 The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements, 20  
 Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,  
 Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,  
 If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.) 25

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
 Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets peep'd  
 from the ground, spotting the gray debris,  
 Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the end-  
 less grass,  
 Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the  
 dark-brown fields uprisen,  
 Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards, 30  
 Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
 Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,<sup>3</sup>  
 Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,  
 With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black,  
 With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women  
 standing, 36  
 With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night,  
 With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the  
 unbarred heads,

3. The funeral train of Abraham Lincoln passed, amid multitudes of mourners, through Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and In-

diana, on its way to Springfield, Illinois, where the martyred President was buried.

*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* · 899

With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,  
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising  
    strong and solemn, 40  
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coffin,  
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid these  
    you journey,  
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,  
Here, coffin that slowly passes,  
I give you my sprig of lilac. 45

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,  
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,  
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O sane  
    and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,  
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies, 50  
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,  
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,  
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,  
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven, 55  
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,  
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,  
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after  
    night,  
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the  
    other stars all look'd on,)  
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know  
    not what kept me from sleep,) 60  
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full  
    you were of woe,  
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent  
    night,  
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black  
    of the night,  
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,  
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone. 65

9

Sing on there in the swamp,  
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,  
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,

But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,  
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me. 70

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?  
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has  
gone?  
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sca-winds blown from east and west,  
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till  
there on the prairies meeting, 75  
These and with these and the breath of my chant,  
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?  
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,  
To adorn the burial-house of him I love? 80

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,  
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid  
and bright,  
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking  
sun, burning, expanding the air,  
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves  
of the trees prolific,  
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a  
wind-dapple here and there, 85  
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky,  
and shadows,  
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,  
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen  
homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,  
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying  
tides, and the ships, 90  
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light,  
Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,  
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,  
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,  
The gentle soft-born measureless light, 95  
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,  
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,  
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.



13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,  
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the  
bushes, 100  
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,  
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!

O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer! 105  
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)  
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,  
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the  
farmers preparing their crops,  
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and for-  
ests, 110  
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the  
storms,)

Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the  
voices of children and women,  
'The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,  
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy  
with labor,

And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its  
meals and minutia of daily usages, 115  
And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the cities pent—  
lo, then and there,

Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the  
rest,

Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,  
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me, 120  
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,  
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands  
of companions,

I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,  
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dim-  
ness,

To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still. 125

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,  
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,  
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,  
 From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,  
 Came the carol of the bird. 130

And the charm of the carol rapt me,  
 As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,  
 And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,<sup>4</sup>* 135  
*Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,*  
*In the day, in the night, to all, to each,*  
*Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,*  
*For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,* 140  
*And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!*  
*For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,*  
*Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?*  
*Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,* 145  
*I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfal-*  
*teringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,*  
*When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,*  
*Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,*  
*Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.* 150

*From me to thee glad serenades,*  
*Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings*  
*for thee,*  
*And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are*  
*fitting,*  
*And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,* 155  
*The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,*  
*And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,*  
*And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,*  
*Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the*  
*prairies wide,* 160  
*Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,*  
*I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

4. Compare the song of the bird in this poem with the lyric songs of the bird in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."

15

To the tally of my soul,  
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,  
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night. 165

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,  
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,  
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,  
As to long panoramas of visions. 170

And I saw askant the armies,  
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,  
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I  
saw them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,  
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)  
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken. 176

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,  
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,  
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,  
But I saw they were not as was thought, 180  
'They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,  
'The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,  
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,  
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night, 185  
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,  
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,  
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,  
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding  
the night,  
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again  
bursting with joy, 190  
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,  
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,  
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,  
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee, 195  
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing  
with thee,  
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievments out of the night,  
 The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,  
 And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul, 200  
 With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of  
     woe,  
 With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,  
 Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep,  
     for the dead I loved so well,  
 For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for  
     his dear sake,  
 Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul, 205  
 There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.  
1865, 1881–1882

### *From AUTUMN RIVULETS<sup>5</sup>* *There Was a Child Went Forth*

There was a child went forth every day,  
 And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,  
 And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of  
     the day,  
 Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child, 5  
 And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and red  
     clover, and the song of the phœbe-bird,  
 And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the  
     mare's foal and the cow's calf,  
 And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pond-side,  
 And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there, and  
     the beautiful curious liquid,  
 And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became part  
     of him. 10

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became part of  
     him,  
 Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn, and the  
     esculent roots of the garden,  
 And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit afterward,  
     and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road,  
 And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the  
     tavern whence he had lately risen,

5. The title "Autumn Rivulets" does not refer in particular to the poet's later years, but in its imagery implies a "sea of time" to which the "wayward rivulets"

of individual life flow. "Autumn Rivulets" as a group title first appeared in the seventh edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1881–1882).

And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the school, 15  
And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,  
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot negro boy  
and girl,  
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had con-  
ceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,  
They gave this child more of themselves than that, 20  
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper-table,  
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a wholesome  
odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by,  
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd, unjust,  
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,  
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the  
yearning and swelling heart, 26

Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real, the  
thought if after all it should prove unreal,  
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the curious  
whether and how,

Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?  
Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not flashes  
and specks what are they? 30

The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods in the  
windows,

Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing at the  
ferries,

The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the river be-  
tween,

Shadows, auricola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables of  
white or brown two miles off,

The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the little  
boat slack-tow'd astern, 35

The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,

The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint away soli-  
tary by itself, the spread of purity it lies motionless in,

The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh  
and shore mud,

These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who  
now goes, and will always go forth every day.

To a Common Prostitute<sup>7</sup>

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman, liberal  
 and lusty as Nature,  
 Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,  
 Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the leaves to rustle  
 for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle for you.

My girl I appoint with you an appointment, and I charge you that  
 you make preparation to be worthy to meet me,  
 And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I come. 5

Till then I salute you with a significant look that you do not forget  
 me.

1860

Prayer of Columbus<sup>8</sup>

A batter'd, wreck'd old man,  
 Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,  
 Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary months,  
 Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,  
 I take my way along the island's edge, 5  
 Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe!  
 Haply I may not live another day;  
 I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,  
 Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee. 10  
 Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee,  
 Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,  
 My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration merely;  
 Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth, 15  
 Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations,  
 Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come to  
 Thee,  
 Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and strictly kept  
 them,  
 Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee,  
 In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not, 20  
 Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

7. Whitman told William Sloane Kennedy that this poem was inspired by "the beautiful little idyl of the New Testament concerning the woman taken in adultery." Cf. John viii: 3-11.

8. "Prayer of Columbus" was written in 1874, when Whitman had little hope of recovering from his first severe stroke of paralysis. He often referred to his poems as a kind of exploration.

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,  
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thought of Thee,  
Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee;  
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to Thee. 25

O I am sure they really came from Thee,  
The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,  
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,  
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,  
These sped me on. 30

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,  
By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifed lands uncloy'd, untoos'd,  
By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the  
known.

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,  
O small or great I know not—haply what broad fields, what lands, 35  
Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I know,  
Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge worthy Thee,  
Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to reaping-  
tools,  
Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross, may bud and  
blossom there.

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand; 40  
That Thou O God my life hast lighted,  
With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,  
Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,  
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;  
For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees, 45  
Old, poor, and paralyzed, I thank Thee.

My terminus near,  
The clouds already closing in upon me,  
The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,  
I yield my ships to Thee. 50

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,  
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,  
Let the old timbers part, I will not part,  
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet me,  
Thee, Thee at least I know. 55

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?  
What do I know of life? what of myself?  
I know not even my own work past or present,  
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,

Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition, 60  
 Mocking, perplexing me.

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they?  
 As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,  
 Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,  
 And on the distant waves sail countless ships, 65  
 And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.

1874, 1881-1882

## *From WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH* *Darest Thou Now O Soul*

Darest thou now O soul,  
 Walk out with me toward the unknown region,  
 Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,  
 Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand, 5  
 Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,  
 Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,  
 All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Till when the ties loosen, 10  
 All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,  
 Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,  
 In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,  
 Equal equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil O soul. 15

1871, 1881

## *Whispers of Heavenly Death*<sup>8</sup>

Whispers of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,  
 Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,  
 Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft and low,  
 Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever flowing,  
 (Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human  
     tears?) 5

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,  
 Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,  
 With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,  
 Appearing and disappearing.

8. "Whispers of Heavenly Death" is the title poem of a new section added to *Leaves of Grass* in 1871.



(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;  
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,  
Some soul is passing over.)

1871

## Chanting the Square Deific<sup>9</sup>

1

Chanting the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of the  
sides,

Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,  
Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jehovah am  
I,

Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;<sup>1</sup>

Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,

Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,

As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos,<sup>2</sup> with laws,

Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with those mighty  
laws rolling,

Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will have that  
man's life;

Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons, gravitation, the  
appointed days, mercy? no more have I,

But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed days that  
forgive not,

I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the least  
remorse.

2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,

With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,

Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies and  
poems,

From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes—lo! Hermes<sup>3</sup>—I—lo! mine  
is Hercules'<sup>4</sup> face,

All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself,

Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and cruci-  
fied, and many times shall be again,

All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sisters' sake,  
for the soul's sake,

9. In analyzing the religious experience of mankind, Whitman follows trinitarian orthodoxy in his references to God the Father, or creator; God the Son, or intercessor; and God the Holy Ghost, or the intuitive revelation. But note that in stanza 3 Whitman also places Satan among the "deific" experiences.

1. Supreme gods of the Hebrew, Hindu,

and Roman religions.

2. The Greek god, more primitive than Zeus, whose name, "Time," suggests an origin before creation.

3. Messenger for the gods on Olympus.

4. The most celebrated hero of classical mythology, son of Zeus and a mortal woman, worshiped for his many benefits to mankind.

Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, with  
 the kiss of affection, 20  
 For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope and all  
 enclosing charity,  
 With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane words,  
 mine only,  
 Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself to an  
 early death;  
 But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither early  
 nor late,  
 And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies. 25

## 3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,  
 Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,  
 Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,  
 With sudra<sup>5</sup> face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of my  
 heart, proud as any,  
 Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to rule  
 me, 30  
 Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with many  
 wiles,  
 (Though it was thought I was baffled and dispel'd, and my wiles  
 done, but that will never be,)  
 Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new lands duly  
 appearing, (and old ones also,)  
 Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real as any,  
 Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words. 35

## 4

Santa Spirita,<sup>6</sup> breather, life,  
 Beyond the light, lighter than light,  
 Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,  
 Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,  
 Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Sav-  
 iour and Satan, 40  
 Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what were  
 God?)  
 Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive,  
 (namely the unseen,)  
 Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the  
 general soul,  
 Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,  
 Breathe my breath also through these songs. 45

1865-1866, 1881-1882

5. Among the Hindu castes of India,  
 the Sudra is the lowest, the caste of

the untouchables.

6. Holy Spirit. *Cf.* John xiv: 16-17.

A Noiseless Patient Spider

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them. 5

And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul. 10  
1862-1863 1871, 1881

From FROM NOON TO STARRY NIGHT<sup>7</sup>

To a Locomotive in Winter

Thee for my recitative,  
Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-day  
declining,  
Thee in thy panoply, thy measure'd dual throbbing and thy beat  
convulsive,  
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,  
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating,  
shuttling at thy sides, 5  
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the  
distance,  
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,  
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple,  
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack,  
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of  
thy wheels, 10  
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,  
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering;  
Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the  
continent,  
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I  
see thee,  
With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow, 15  
By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,  
By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

7. Whitman first grouped a number of poems (some of them previously published) under the title "From Noon to

Starry Night" in the seventh edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1881-1882).

Fierce-throated beauty!  
 Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging  
     lamps at night,  
 Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake,  
     rousing all, 20  
 Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,  
 (No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,)  
 Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,  
 Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,  
 To the free skies unpent and glad and strong. 25

1876, 1881

### By Broad Potomac's Shore

By broad Potomac's shore, again old tongue,  
 (Still uttering, still ejaculating, canst never cease this babble?)  
 Again old heart so gay, again to you, your sense, the full flush spring  
     returning,  
 Again the freshness and the odors, again Virginia's summer sky,  
     pellucid blue and silver,  
 Again the forenoon purple of the hills, 5  
 Again the deathless grass, so noiseless soft and green,  
 Again the blood-red roses blooming.

Perfume this book of mine O blood-red roses!  
 Lave subtly with your waters every line Potomac!  
 Give me of you O spring, before I close, to put between its pages! 10  
 O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you!  
 O deathless grass, of you!

1876, 1881

### From Democratic Vistas<sup>2</sup>

[*American Democracy*]

Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training school for making first-class men. It is life's gymnasium, not of good only, but of all. We try often, though we fall back often. A brave delight, fit for freedom's athletes, fills these arenas, and fully satisfies, out of the action in them, irrespective of success. Whatever we do not attain, we at any rate attain the experiences of the fight, the hardening of

2. After the ordeal of the Civil War, Whitman wrote two essays analyzing and criticizing the condition of democracy in the United States. "Democracy" appeared in the *Galaxy*, December,

1867, and "Personalism" in the same periodical in May, 1868. In 1871 the two essays were consolidated in the volume *Democratic Vistas*.

the strong campaign, and throb with currents of attempt at least. Time is ample. Let the victors come after us. Not for nothing does evil play its part among us. Judging from the main portions of the history of the world, so far, justice is always in jeopardy, peace walks amid hourly pitfalls, and of slavery, misery, meanness, the craft of tyrants and the credulity of the populace, in some of the protean forms, no voice can at any time say, *They are not*. The clouds break a little, and the sun shines out—but soon and certain the lowering darkness falls again, as if to last forever. Yet is there an immortal courage and prophecy in every sane soul that cannot, must not, under any circumstances, capitulate. *Vive*, the attack—the perennial assault! *Vive*, the unpopular cause—the spirit that audaciously aims—the never-abandon'd efforts, pursued the same amid opposing proofs and precedents.

Once, before the war (alas! I dare not say how many times the mood has come!) I, too, was fill'd with doubt and gloom. A foreigner, an acute and good man, had impressively said to me, that day—putting in form, indeed, my own observations: "I have travel'd much in the United States, and watch'd their politicians, and listen'd to the speeches of the candidates, and read the journals, and gone into the public-houses, and heard the unguarded talk of men. And I have found your vaunted America honeycomb'd from top to toe with infidelism, even to itself and its own programme. I have mark'd the brazen hell-faces of secession and slavery gazing defiantly from all the windows and doorways. I have everywhere found, primarily, thieves and scalliwags arranging the nominations to offices, and sometimes filling the offices themselves. I have found the north just as full of bad stuff as the south. Of the holders of public office in the Nation or the States or their municipalities, I have found that not one in a hundred has been chosen by any spontaneous selection of the outsiders, the people, but all have been nominated and put through by little or large caucuses of the politicians, and have got in by corrupt rings and electioneering, not capacity or desert. I have noticed how the millions of sturdy farmers and mechanics are thus the helpless supple-jacks of comparatively few politicians. And I have noticed more and more, the alarming spectacle of parties usurping the government, and openly and shamelessly wielding it for party purposes."

Sad, serious, deep truths. Yet are there other, still deeper, amply confronting, dominating truths. Over those politicians and great and little rings, and over all their insolence and wiles, and over the powerfulest parties, looms a power, too sluggish maybe, but ever holding decisions and decrees in hand, ready, with stern process, to execute them as soon as plainly needed—and at times, indeed, summarily crushing to atoms the mightiest parties, even in the hour of

their pride.

In saner hours far different are the amounts of these things from what, at first sight, they appear. Though it is no doubt important who is elected governor, mayor, or legislator (and full of dismay when incompetent or vile ones get elected, as they sometimes do), there are other, quieter contingencies, infinitely more important. Shams, etc., will always be the show, like ocean's scum; enough, if waters deep and clear make up the rest. Enough, that while the piled embroider'd shoddy gaud and fraud spreads to the superficial eye, the hidden warp and weft are genuine, and will wear forever. Enough, in short, that the race, the land which could raise such as the late rebellion, could also put it down. \* \* \*

Then still the thought returns (like the thread-passage in overtures), giving the key and echo to these pages. When I pass to and fro, different latitudes, different seasons, beholding the crowds of the great cities, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, New Orleans, Baltimore—when I mix with these interminable swarms of alert, turbulent, good-natured, independent citizens, mechanics, clerks, young persons—at the idea of this mass of men, so fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a singular awe falls upon me. I feel, with dejection and amazement, that among our geniuses and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, created a single image-making work for them, or absorb'd the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs—and which, thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpress'd.

Dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's. What has fill'd, and fills today our intellect, our fancy, furnishing the standards therein, is yet foreign. The great poems, Shakspeare included, are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of democracy. The models of our literature, as we get it from other lands, ultramarine, have had their birth in courts, and bask'd and grown in castle sunshine; all smells of princes' favors. Of workers of a certain sort, we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learn'd, all complacent. But touch'd by the national test, or tried by the standards of democratic personality, they wither to ashes. I say I have not seen a single writer, artist, lecturer, or what not, that has confronted the voiceless but ever erect and active, pervading, underlying will and typic aspiration of the land, in a spirit kindred to itself. Do you call those genteel little creatures American poets? Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work, American art, American drama, taste, verse? I think I hear, echoed as from some mountaintop afar in the west, the scornful laugh of the Genius of these States.

Democracy, in silence, biding its time, ponders its own ideals, not of literature and art only—not of men only, but of women. The idea of the women of America (extricated from this daze, this fossil and unhealthy air which hangs about the word *lady*) develop'd, raised to become the robust equals, workers, and, it may be, even practical and political deciders with the men—greater than man, we may admit, through their divine maternity, always their towering, emblematical attribute—but great, at any rate, as man, in all departments; or, rather, capable of being so, soon as they realize it, and can bring themselves to give up toys and fictions, and launch forth, as men do, amid real, independent, stormy life.

Then, as toward our thought's finalè (and, in that, over-arching the true scholar's lesson), we have to say there can be no complete or epical presentation of democracy in the aggregate, or anything like it, at this day, because its doctrines will only be effectually incarnated in any one branch, when, in all, their spirit is at the root and center. Far, far, indeed, stretch, in distance, our Vistas! How much is still to be disentangled, freed! How long it takes to make this American world see that it is, in itself, the final authority and reliance! \* \* \*

I submit, therefore, that the fruition of democracy, on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future. As, under any profound and comprehensive view of the gorgeous-composite feudal world, we see in it, through the long ages and cycles of ages, the results of a deep, integral, human and divine principle, or fountain, from which issued laws, ecclesia, manners, institutes, costumes, personalities, poems (hitherto unequal'd), faithfully partaking of their source, and indeed only arising either to betoken it, or to furnish parts of that varied-flowing display, whose center was one and absolute—so, long ages hence, shall the due historian or critic make at least an equal retrospect, an equal history for the democratic principle. It too must be adorn'd, credited with its results—then, when it, with imperial power, through amplest time, has dominated mankind—has been the source and test of all the moral, æsthetic, social, political, and religious expressions and institutes of the civilized world—has begotten them in spirit and in form, and has carried them to its own unprecedented heights—has had (it is possible) monastics and ascetics, more numerous, more devout than the monks and priests of all previous creeds—has sway'd the ages with a breadth and rectitude tallying Nature's own—has fashion'd, systematized, and triumphantly finish'd and carried out, in its own interest, and with unparallel'd success, a new earth and a new man. \* \* \*

So much contributed, to be conn'd well, to help prepare and brace our edifice, our plann'd Idea—we still proceed to give it in

another of its aspects—perhaps the main, the high façade of all. For to democracy, the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average, surely join'd another principle, equally unyielding, closely tracking the first, indispensable to it, opposite (as the sexes are opposite), and whose existence, confronting and ever modifying the other, often clashing, paradoxical, yet neither of highest avail without the other, plainly supplies to these grand cosmic politics of ours, and to the launch'd forth mortal dangers of republicanism, today, or any day, the counterpart and offset whereby Nature restrains the deadly original relentlessness of all her first-class laws. This second principle is individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself—identity—personalism. Whatever the name, its acceptance and thorough infusions through the organizations of political commonalty now shooting Aurora-like about the world, are of utmost importance, as the principle itself is needed for very life's sake. It forms, in a sort, or is to form, the compensating balance-wheel of the successful working machinery of aggregate America. \* \* \*

There is, in sanest hours, a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal. This is the thought of identity—yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts. In such devout hours, in the midst of the significant wonders of heaven and earth (significant only because of the Me in the center), creeds, conventions, fall away and become of no account before this simple idea. Under the luminousness of real vision, it alone takes possession, takes value. Like the shadowy dwarf in the fable, once liberated and look'd upon, it expands over the whole earth, and spreads to the roof of heaven.

The quality of BEING, in the object's self, according to its own central idea and purpose, and of growing therefrom and thereto—not criticism by other standards, and adjustments thereto—is the lesson of Nature. True, the full man wisely gathers, culls, absorbs; but if, engaged disproportionately in that, he slights or overlays the precious idiocracy and special nativity and intention that he is, the man's self, the main thing, is a failure, however wide his general cultivation. Thus, in our times, refinement and delicatessen<sup>5</sup> are not only attended to sufficiently, but threaten to eat us up, like a cancer. Already, the democratic genius watches, ill-pleased, these tendencies. Provision for a little healthy rudeness, savage virtue, justification of what one has in one's self, whatever it is, is demanded. Negative qualities, even deficiencies, would be a relief. Singleness and normal

5. Borrowed from the French and used by Whitman to mean "fastidiousness to the point of squeamishness."



simplicity and separation, amid this more and more complex, more and more artificialized state of society—how pensively we yearn for them! how we would welcome their return! \* \* \*

America has yet morally and artistically originated nothing. She seems singularly unaware that the models of persons, books, manners, etc., appropriate for former conditions and for European lands, are but exiles and exotics here. No current of her life, as shown on the surfaces of what is authoritatively called her society, accepts or runs into social or æsthetic democracy; but all the currents set squarely against it. Never, in the Old World, was thoroughly upholster'd exterior appearance and show, mental and other, built entirely on the idea of caste, and on the sufficiency of mere outside acquisition—never were glibness, verbal intellect more the test, the emulation—more loftily elevated as head and sample—than they are on the surface of our republican States this day. The writers of a time hint the mottoes of its gods. The word of the modern, say these voices, in the word Culture.

We find ourselves abruptly in close quarters with the enemy. This word Culture, or what it has come to represent, involves, by contrast, our whole theme, and has been, indeed, the spur, urging us to engagement. Certain questions arise. As now taught, accepted and carried out, are not the processes of culture rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels, who believe in nothing? Shall a man lose himself in countless masses of adjustments, and be so shaped with reference to this, that, and the other, that the simply good and healthy and brave parts of him are reduced and clipp'd away, like the bordering of box in a garden? You can cultivate corn and roses and orchards—but who shall cultivate the mountain peaks, the ocean, and the tumbling gorgeousness of the clouds? Lastly—is the readily given reply that culture only seeks to help, systematize, and put in attitude, the elements of fertility and power, a conclusive reply?

I do not so much object to the name, or word, but I should certainly insist, for the purposes of these States, on a radical change of category, in the distribution of precedence. I should demand a programme of culture, drawn out, not for a single class alone, or for the parlors or lecture rooms, but with an eye to practical life, the west, the workingmen, the facts of farms and jackplanes and engineers, and of the broad range of the women also of the middle and working strata, and with reference to the perfect equality of women, and of a grand and powerful motherhood. I should demand of this programme or theory a scope generous enough to include the widest human area. It must have for its spinal meaning the formation of a typical personality of character, eligible to the uses of the high average of men—and *not* restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses. The best culture will always be that of the manly and coura-

geous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect—aiming to form, over this continent, an idiocracy of universalism, which, true child of America, will bring joy to its mother, returning to her in her own spirit, recruiting myriads of offspring, able, natural, perceptive, tolerant, devout believers in her, America, and with some definite instinct why and for what she has arisen, most vast, most formidable of historic births, and is, now and here, with wonderful step, journeying through Time.

The problem, as it seems to me, presented to the New World, is, under permanent law and order, and after preserving cohesion (ensemble-Individuality), at all hazards, to vitalize man's free play of special Personalism,<sup>6</sup> recognizing in it something that calls ever more to be consider'd, fed, and adopted as the sub-stratum for the best that belongs to us (government indeed is for it), including the new æsthetics of our future. \* \* \*

Attempting, then, however crudely, a basic model or portrait of personality for general use for the manliness of the State (and doubtless that is most useful which is most simple and comprehensive for all, and toned low enough), we should prepare the canvas well beforehand. Parentage must consider itself in advance. (Will the time hasten when fatherhood and motherhood shall become a science—and the noblest science?) To our model, a clear-blooded, strong-fibered physique is indispensable; the questions of food, drink, air, exercise assimilation, digestion, can never be intermitted. Out of these we desery a well-begotten selfhood—in youth, fresh, ardent, emotional, aspiring, full of adventure; at maturity, brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flippant nor somber; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, somewhat flush'd, breast expanded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound outvies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable also of flashing—and a general presence that holds its own in the company of the highest. (For it is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals, or in any distinguished collection, with *aplomb*—and *not* culture, or any knowledge or intellect whatever.) \* \* \*

Leaving still unspecified several sterling parts of any model fit for the future personality of America, I must not fail, again and ever, to pronounce myself on one, probably the least attended to in modern times—a hiatus, indeed, threatening its gloomiest consequences after us. I mean the simple, unsophisticated Conscience, the primary moral element. If I were asked to specify in what quarter lie the

6. It seems likely that Whitman first introduced the term "Personalism" to designate the fusion between the independent individual and the ideal democratic society. It was already an established term in German transcendental-

ism (in Schleiermacher's *Discourses*, not then translated). Bronson Alcott got it from Whitman; through the St. Louis transcendentalists it then passed into the general literature of American philosophy.

grounds of darkest dread, respecting the America of our hopes, I should have to point to this particular. I should demand the invariable application to individuality, this day and any day, of that old, ever-true plumb-rule of persons, eras, nations. Our triumphant modern civilizee,<sup>7</sup> with his all-schooling and his wondrous appliances, will still show himself but an amputation while this deficiency remains. Beyond (assuming a more hopeful tone), the vertebration of the manly and womanly personalism of our Western world, can only be, and is, indeed, to be (I hope), its all penetrating Religiousness.

The ripeness of Religion is doubtless to be looked for in this field of individuality, and is a result that no organization or church can ever achieve. As history is poorly retain'd by what the technists call history, and is not given out from their pages, except the learner has in himself the sense of the well-wrapt, never yet written, perhaps impossible to be written, history—so Religion, although casually arrested, and, after a fashion, preserv'd in the churches and creeds, does not depend at all upon them, but is a part of the identified soul, which, when greatest, knows not bibles in the old way, but in new ways—the identified soul, which can really confront Religion when it extricates itself entirely from the churches, and not before.

Personalism fuses this, and favors it. I should say, indeed, that only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion positively come forth at all. Only here, and on such terms, the meditation, the devout ecstasy, the soaring flight. Only here, communion with the mysteries, the eternal problems, whence? whither? Alone, and identity, and the mood—and the soul emerges, and all statements, churches, sermons, melt away like vapors. Alone, and silent thought and awe, and aspiration—and then the interior consciousness, like a hitherto unseen inscription, in magic ink, beams out its wondrous lines to the sense. Bibles may convey, and priests expound, but it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of one's isolated Self, to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable.

To practically enter into politics is an important part of American personalism. To every young man, north and south, earnestly studying these things, I should here, as an offset to what I have said in former pages, now also say, that maybe to views of very large scope, after all, perhaps the political (perhaps the literary and sociological) America goes best about its development its own way—sometimes, to temporary sight, appalling enough. It is the fashion among dilettants and fops (perhaps I myself am not guiltless), to decry the

7. Whitman's coinage: one civilized to the point of weakness.

whole formulation of the active politics of America, as beyond redemption, and to be carefully kept away from. See you that you do not fall into this error. America, it may be, is doing very well upon the whole, notwithstanding these antics of the parties and their leaders, these half-brain'd nominees, and many ignorant ballots, and many elected failures and blatherers. It is the dilettants, and all who shirk their duty, who are not doing well. As for you, I advise you to enter more strongly yet into politics. I advise every young man to do so. Always inform yourself; always do the best you can; always vote. Disengage yourself from parties. They have been useful, and to some extent remain so; but the floating, uncommitted electors, farmers, clerks, mechanics, the masters of parties—watching aloof, inclining victory this side or that side—such are the ones most needed, present and future. For America, if eligible at all to downfall and ruin, is eligible within herself, not without; for I see clearly that the combined foreign world could not beat her down. But these savage, wolfish parties alarm me. Owning no law but their own will, more and more combative, less and less tolerant of the idea of ensemble and of equal brotherhood, the perfect equality of the States, the ever-overarching American ideas, it behooves you to convey yourself implicitly to no party, nor submit blindly to their dictators, but steadily hold yourself judge and master over all of them.

1867–1868, 1871

## SIDNEY LANIER

(1842–1881)

Sidney Lanier was born in Macon, Georgia, on February 3, 1842, and he received his education at Oglethorpe University. When the Civil War started, Lanier enlisted as a Confederate private, serving actively until captured four months before the end of the conflict. In the Federal prison at Point Lookout, Maryland, he developed tuberculosis, and the remainder of his life became a fight against poor health and poverty. His first published book was a novel, *Tiger-Lilies* (1867), based upon his experiences in the Civil War.

Though Lanier constantly devoted himself to poetry, it was not until the publication of "Corn" (1875) in *Lippincott's* that he received recognition. This poem and "The Symphony" (1875), which followed, were both timely in subject matter, the first touching on the plight of penniless farmers, the latter attacking the evils of commercialism. His cantata, *The Centennial Meditation of Columbia*, 1776–1876, was performed at the opening of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and was well received

when sung by a large chorus, but when published, without Dudley Buck's music, it was harshly criticized. In these works he was attempting a resolution between the rhythms of poetry and those of music, which he had studied all his life; but like Whitman he discovered that the majority of readers, accustomed to the established meters, were deaf to the new rhythms that he provided in such poems as "The Symphony" and "The Marshes of Glynn" (1878).

A volume of verse, *Poems* (1877), did not sell, and soon Lanier was forced into hack work to earn a living, made more difficult by ill health. A winter spent in San Antonio (1872) where he enjoyed the German choral societies, had been followed by his engagement in 1873 as flutist in the Peabody Orchestra in Baltimore. In 1878, still intent upon exploring the relations between poetry and music, he settled once more in Baltimore, where he again had the opportunity to serve as flutist in the Peabody Symphony Orchestra. There he added to his small earnings by lecturing on English literature and versification at the Johns Hopkins University in 1879. The same year he edited *The Boy's Froissart*, following it with his best-selling book, *The Boy's King Arthur* (1880). His lectures on versification, published as *The Science of English Verse* (1880), presented his thesis that poetry and music are governed by the same artistic laws. Though his study of prosody is no longer considered important, the book is nonetheless an interesting early

advocacy of fluid verse form. Lanier hoped it would bring him a professorship in the university, but critical reception was indifferent, and no professional advancement resulted. His final years were spent in gathering materials for his lectures and in writing some of his best poetry. He died when only forty years old, leaving a sufficient number of fine poems to suggest an even greater potentiality. Lanier's widow edited *Poems of Sidney Lanier* (1884), and some of his lectures at Johns Hopkins were later published as *The English Novel* (1883) and *Shakespeare and His Forerunners* (1902).

Though a southerner by tradition and chivalrous by nature, Lanier was never one to dwell on the dead past. In his social and economic criticism he was ahead of his times, and his dialect poems, with their mild humor, also give Lanier a place in the vanguard of regional realism.

A full critical edition of Lanier's writings is *The Centennial Edition of Sidney Lanier*, 10 vols., under the general editorship of Charles R. Anderson, 1945. Morgan Callaway, Jr., edited *Select Poems of Sidney Lanier*, 1895, with a scholarly introduction, notes, and bibliography. Henry W. Lanier edited *Selections from Sidney Lanier: Prose and Verse*, 1916; *Selected Poems of Sidney Lanier*, edited by Stark Young, 1947, contains some less accessible poems. *The Letters of Sidney Lanier, 1866-1881*, were edited by Henry Lanier, 1899.

There are three studies of Lanier's life and work: Edwin Mims, *Sidney Lanier*, 1905; Aubrey H. Starke, *Sidney Lanier: A Biographical and Critical Study*, 1933; and Lincoln Lorenz, *The Life of Sidney Lanier*, 1935. A good study of Lanier's versification is Gay W. Allen's "Sidney Lanier," in his *American Prosody*, 1935, pp. 277-306. The text for the following poems is based on the editions of 1877 and 1884.

The Symphony<sup>1</sup>

'O Trade! O Trade! would thou wert dead!  
 The Time needs heart—'tis tired of head:  
 We're all for love,' the violins said.  
 'Of what avail the rigorous tale?  
 Of bill for coin and box for bale? 5  
 Grant thee, O Trade! thine uttermost hope:  
 Level red gold with blue sky-slope,  
 And base it deep as devils grope:  
 When all's done, what hast thou won  
 Of the only sweet that's under the sun? 10  
 Ay, canst thou buy a single sigh  
 Of true love's least, least ecstasy?  
 Then, with a bridegroom's heart-beats trembling,  
 All the mightier strings assembling  
 Ranged them on the violins' side 15  
 As when the bridegroom leads the bride,  
 And, heart in voice, together cried:  
 'Yea, what avail the endless tale  
 Of gain by cunning and plus by sale?  
 Look up the land, look down the land, 20  
 The poor, the poor, the poor, they stand  
 Wedged by the pressing of Trade's hand  
 Against an inward-opening door  
 That pressure tightens evermore:  
 They sigh a monstrous foul-air sigh 25  
 For the outside leagues of liberty,  
 Where Art, sweet lark, translates the sky  
 Into a heavenly melody.  
 "Each day, all day" (these poor folks say),  
 "In the same old year-long, drear-long way, 30  
 We weave in the mills and heave in the kilns,  
 We sieve mine-meshes under the hills,  
 And thief much gold from the Devil's bank tills,  
 To relieve, O God, what manner of ills?—  
 The beasts, they hunger, and eat, and die; 35  
 And so do we, and the world's a sty;  
 Hush, fellow-swine: why nuzzle and cry?

1. "The Symphony" was written in Baltimore in March, 1875, and published in *Lippincott's* for June of that year; it was reprinted with revisions in *Poems* (1877) and with further revisions in *Poems of Sidney Lanier* (1884). Lanier's devotion to music, his strong belief that commercialism was destroying spiritual values, and his hope

for a society based on harmony and love, are three persistent themes in all his writing. These lines offer a remarkable demonstration of his theory of the resemblances between music and poetry.

2. A just count; a reckoning by number.

*Swinehood hath no remedy*

Say many men, and hasten by,  
Clamping the nose and blinking the eye. 40

But who said once, in the lordly tone,

*Man shall not live by bread alone*

*But all that cometh from the Throne?*<sup>3</sup>

Hath God said so?

But Trade saith No: 45

And the kilns and the curt-tongued mills say *Go!*

*There's plenty that can, if you can't: we know.*

*Move out, if you think you're underpaid.*

*The poor are prolific; we're not afraid;*

*"Trade is trade."* 50

Thercat this passionate protesting

Meckly changed, and softened till

It sank to sad requesting

And suggesting sadder still:

'And oh, if men might some time see 55

How piteous-false the poor decree

That trade no more than trade must be!

Does business mean, *Die, you—live, I?*

Then "Trade is trade" but sings a lie:

'Tis only war grown miserly. 60

If business is battle, name it so:

War-crimes less will shame it so,

And widows less will blame it so.

Alas, for the poor to have some part

In yon sweet living lands of Art, 65

Makes problem not for head, but heart.

Vainly might Plato's brain revolve it:

Plainly the heart of a child could solve it.'

And then, as when from words that seem but rude

We pass to silent pain that sits abroad 70

Back in our heart's great dark and solitude,

So sank the strings to gentle throbbing

Of long chords change-marked with sobbing—

Motherly sobbing, not distinctlier heard

Than half wing-openings of the sleeping bird, 75

Some dream of danger to her young hath stirred.

Then stirring and demurring ceased, and lo!

Every least ripple of the strings' song-flow

Died to a level with each level bow

And made a great chord tranquil-surfaced so, 80

As a brook beneath his curving bank doth go

1 Cf. Luke iv: 4.

To linger in the sacred dark and green  
 Where many boughs the still pool overlean  
 And many leaves make shadow with their sheen.

But presently 85  
 A velvet flute-note fell down pleasantly  
 Upon the bosom of that harmony,  
 And sailed and sailed incessantly,  
 As if a petal from a wild-rose blown  
 Had fluttered down upon that pool of tone 90  
 And boatwise dropped o' the convex side  
 And floated down the glassy tide  
 And clarified and glorified  
 The solemn spaces where the shadows bide.  
 From the warm concave of that fluted note 95  
 Somewhat, half song, half odor, forth did float,  
 As if a rose might somehow be a throat:  
 'When Nature from her far-off glen  
 Flutes her soft messages to men,  
     The flute can say them o'er again; 100  
     Yea, Nature, singing sweet and lone,  
 Breathes through life's strident polyphone<sup>4</sup>  
 The flute-voice in the world of tone.  
     Sweet friends,  
     Man's love ascends 105  
 To finer and diviner ends  
 Than man's mere thought e'er comprehends,  
 For I, e'en I,  
 As here I lie,  
 A petal on a harmony, 110  
 Demand of Science whence and why  
 Man's tender pain, man's inward cry,  
 When he doth gaze on earth and sky?  
 I am not overbold:  
     I hold 115  
 Full powers from Nature manifold.  
 I speak for each no-tongued tree  
 That, spring by spring, doth nobler be,  
 And dumbly and most wistfully  
 His mighty prayerful arms outspreads 120  
 Above men's oft-unheeding heads,  
 And his big blessing downward sheds.  
 I speak for all-shaped blooms and leaves,  
 Lichens on stones and moss on caves,  
 Grasses and grains in ranks and sheaves; 125

4. A kind of lute. Cf. "polyphony," the multiplicity of sounds.



Broad-fronded ferns and keen-leaved canes,  
 And briery mazes bounding lanes,  
 And marsh-plants, thirsty-cupped for rains,  
 And milky stems and sugary veins;  
 For every long-armed woman-vine 130  
 That round a piteous tree doth twine;  
 For passionate odors, and divine  
 Pistils, and petals crystalline;  
 All purities of shady springs,  
 All shynesses of film-winged things 135  
 That fly from tree-trunks and bark-rings;  
 All modesties of mountain-fawns  
 That leap to covert from wild lawns,  
 And tremble if the day but dawns;  
 All sparklings of small beady eyes 140  
 Of birds, and sidelong glances wise  
 Wherewith the jay hints tragedies;  
 All piquancies of prickly burs,  
 And smoothnesses of downs and furs,  
 Of ciders<sup>5</sup> and of minivers;<sup>6</sup> 145  
 All limpid honeys that do lie  
 At stamen-bases, nor deny  
 The humming-birds' fine roguery,  
 Bee-thighs, nor any butterfly;  
 All gracious curves of slender wings, 150  
 Bark-mottlings, fibre-spiralings,  
 Fern-wavings and leaf-flickerings;  
 Each dial-marked leaf and flower-bell  
 Wherewith in every lonesome dell  
 Time to himself his hours doth tell; 155  
 All tree-sounds, rustlings of pine-cones,  
 Wind-sighings, doves' melodious moans,  
 And night's unearthly under-tones;  
 All placid lakes and waveless deeps,  
 All cool reposing mountain-steeps, 160  
 Vale-calms and tranquil lotos-sleeps;—  
 Yea, all fair forms, and sounds, and lights,  
 And warmths, and mysteries, and mights,  
 Of Nature's utmost depths and heights.  
 —These doth my timid tongue present, 165  
 Their mouthpiece and leal<sup>7</sup> instrument  
 And servant, all love-eloquent.

I heard, when *All for love* the violins cried:

5. Very soft feathers from the eider duck, hence eider down.

6. A white fur valued highly for court costumes in the Middle Ages.

7. Loyal.

So, Nature calls through all her system wide,  
*Give me thy love, O man, so long denied.* 170  
 Much time is run, and man hath changed his ways,  
 Since Nature, in the antique fable-days,  
 Was hid from man's true love by proxy fays,  
 False fauns and rascal gods that stole her praise.  
 The nymphs, cold creatures of man's colder brain, 175  
 Chilled Nature's streams till man's warm heart was fain  
 Never to lave its love in them again.  
 Later, a sweet Voice *Love thy neighbor* said;<sup>8</sup>  
 Then first the bounds of neighborhood outspread  
 Beyond all confines of old ethnic dread. 180  
 Vainly the Jew might wag his covenant head:  
*All men are neighbors*, so the sweet Voice said.  
 So, when man's arms had circled all man's race,  
 The liberal compass of his warm embrace  
 Stretched bigger yet in the dark bounds of space; 185  
 With hands a-grope he felt smooth Nature's grace,  
 Drew her to breast and kissed her sweetheart face:  
 Yea, man found neighbors in great hills and trees  
 And streams and clouds and suns and birds and bees,  
 And throbbed with neighbor-loves in loving these. 190  
 But oh, the poor! the poor! the poor!  
 That stand by the inward-opening door  
 Trade's hand doth tighten ever more,  
 And sigh their monstrous foul-air sigh  
 For the outside hills of liberty, 195  
 Where Nature spreads her wild blue sky  
 For Art to make into melody!  
 Thou Trade! thou king of the modern days!  
     Change thy ways, 200  
     Change thy ways;  
 Let the sweaty laborers file  
     A little while,  
     A little while,  
 Where Art and Nature sing and smile.  
 Trade! is thy heart all dead, all dead? 205  
 And hast thou nothing but a head?  
 I'm all for heart,' the flute-voice said,  
 And into sudden silence fled,  
 Like as a blush that while 'tis red  
 Dies to a still, still white instead. 210

Thereto a thrilling calm succeeds,  
 Till presently the silence breeds

8. Cf. Matthew xxii: 39.

A little breeze among the reeds<sup>9</sup>  
 That seems to blow by sea-marsh weeds:  
 Then from the gentle stir and fret 215  
 Sings out the melting clarionet,  
 Like as a lady sings while yet  
 Her eyes with salty tears are wet.  
 'O Trade! O Trade!' the Lady said,  
 'I too will wish thee utterly dead 220  
 If all thy heart is in thy head.  
 I'or O my God! and O my God!  
 What shameful ways have women trod  
 At beckoning of Trade's golden rod!  
 Alas when sighs are traders' lies, 225  
 And heart's-case eyes and violet eyes  
 Are merchandise!  
 O purchased lips that kiss with pain!  
 O cheeks coin-spotted with smirch and stain!  
 O trafficked hearts that break in twain! 230  
 —And yet what wonder at my sisters' crime?  
 So hath Trade withered up Love's sinewy prime,  
 Men love not women as in olden time.  
 Ah, not in these cold merchantable days  
 Decm men their life an opal gray, where plays 235  
 The one red Sweet of gracious ladies'-praise.  
 Now, comes a suitor with sharp prying eye—  
 Says, *Here, you Lady, if you'll sell, I'll buy:*  
*Come, heart for heart—a trade? What! weeping? why?*  
 Shame on such wooers' dapper mercery!<sup>1</sup> 240  
 I would my lover kneeling at my feet  
 In humble manliness should cry, O sweet!  
*I know not if thy heart my heart will greet:*  
*I ask not if thy love my love can meet:*  
*Whate'er thy worshipful soft tongue shall say,* 245  
*I'll kiss thine answer, be it yea or nay:*  
*I do but know I love thee, and I pray*  
*To be thy knight until my dying day.<sup>2</sup>*  
 Woe him that cunning trades in hearts contrives!  
 Base love good women to base loving drives 250  
 If men loved larger, larger were our lives;  
 And wooed they nobler, won they nobler wives.'

9. Orchestral instruments with reeds for producing sound.

1. A mercer's wares; the mercer was a dealer in textiles.

2. In ll. 253–323, this idea is developed in the song of the Knight to the Lady, a reconstruction of a lyric form

familiar in the medieval literature of chivalry. This remarkable lyric is in conformity with Lanier's social and artistic motivation as a writer, and with the southern tradition of which he was a creative spokesman.

There thrust the bold straightforward horn  
 To battle for that lady lorn,  
 With heartsome voice of mellow scorn, 255  
 Like any knight in knighthood's morn.

'Now comfort thee,' said he,

'Fair Lady.

For God shall right thy grievous wrong,  
 And man shall sing thee a true-love song, 260  
 Voiced in act his whole life long.

Yea, all thy sweet life long,

Fair Lady.

Where's he that craftily hath said,  
 The day of chivalry is dead? 265

I'll prove that lie upon his head,

Or I will die instead,

Fair Lady.

Is Honor gone into his grave?  
 Hath Faith become a caitiff knave, 270  
 And Selfhood turned into a slave

To work in Mammon's cave,<sup>3</sup>

Fair Lady?

Will Truth's long blade ne'er gleam again?  
 Hath Giant Trade in dungeons slain 275  
 All great contempts of mean-got gain

And hates of inward stain,

Fair Lady?

For aye shall name and fame be sold,  
 And place be hugged for the sake of gold, 280  
 And smirch-robed Justice feebly scold

At Crime all money-bold,

Fair Lady?

Shall self-wrapt husbands aye forget  
 Kiss-pardons for the daily fret 285

Wherewith sweet wifely eyes are wet—

Blind to lips kiss-wise set—

Fair Lady?

Shall lovers higgie, heart for heart,  
 Till wooing grows a trading mart 290

Where much for little, and all for part,

Make love a cheapening art,

Fair Lady?

Shall woman scorch for a single sin  
 That her betrayer may revel in, 295

3. Mammon personifies selfish devotion to riches. In Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book II, Canto vii, Sir Guyon (Temperance) visits Mammon's cave of worldly wealth but does not succumb to greed.

And she be burnt, and he but grin  
 When that the flames begin,  
 Fair Lady?  
 Shall ne'er prevail the woman's plea,  
*We maids would far, far whiter be* 300  
*If that our eyes might sometimes see*  
*Men maids in purity,*  
 Fair Lady?  
 Shall Trade aye salve his conscience-aches  
 With jibes at Chivalry's old mistakes— 305  
 The wars that o'erhot knighthood makes  
 For Christ's and ladies' sakes,  
 Fair Lady?  
 Now by each knight that e'er hath prayed  
 To fight like a man and love like a maid, 310  
 Since Pembroke's<sup>4</sup> life, as Pembroke's blade,  
 I' the scabbard, death, was laid,  
 Fair Lady,  
 I dare avouch my faith is bright  
 That God doth right and God hath might. 315  
 Nor time hath changed His hair to white,  
 Nor His dear love to spite,  
 Fair Lady.  
 I doubt no doubts: I strive, and shrive my clay,  
 And fight my fight in the patient modern way 320  
 For true love and for thee—ah me! and pray  
 To be thy knight until my dying day,  
 Fair Lady.  
 Made end that knightly horn, and spurred away  
 Into the thick of the melodious fray. 325  
 And then the hautboy<sup>5</sup> played and smiled,  
 And sang like any large-eyed child,  
 Cool-hearted and all undefiled.  
 'Huge Trade!' he said,  
 'Would thou wouldst lift me on thy head 330  
 And run where'er my finger led!  
 Once said a Man—and wise was He—  
*Never shalt thou the heavens see,*  
*Save as a little child thou be.'*<sup>6</sup>  
 Then o'er sea-lashings of commingling tunes 335  
 The ancient wise bassoons,  
 Like weird,

4. William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, nephew of Sir Philip Sidney; the first folio of Shakespeare's plays was dedicated to him and his brother.

5. Oboe; a slender wood-wind instrument with a plaintive tone.

6. Cf. Matthew xix: 14, and Mark x: 15.

Gray-beard  
 Old harpers sitting on the high sea-dunes,  
 Chanted runes:<sup>7</sup> 340  
 'Bright-waved gain, gray-waved loss,  
 The sea of all doth lash and toss,  
 One wave forward and one across:  
 But now 'twas trough, now 'tis crest,  
 And worst doth foam and flash to best, 345  
 And curst to blest.  
 'Life! Life! thou sca-fugue,<sup>8</sup> writ from east to west,  
 Love, Love alone can pore  
 On thy dissolving score  
 Of harsh half-phrasings, 350  
 Blotted ere writ,  
 And double crasings  
 Of chords most fit.  
 Yea, Love, sole music-master blest,  
 May read thy weltering palimpsest.<sup>9</sup> 355  
 To follow Time's dying melodies through,  
 And never to lose the old in the new,  
 And ever to solve the discords true—  
 Love alone can do.  
 And ever Love hears the poor-folks' crying, 360  
 And ever Love hears the women's sighing,  
 And ever sweet knighthood's death-defying,  
 And ever wise childhood's deep implying,  
 But never a trader's glozing and lying.  
 'And yet shall Love himself be heard, 365  
 Though long deferred, though long deferred:  
 O'er the modern waste a dove<sup>1</sup> hath whirred:  
 Music is Love in search of a word.'

1875, 1877

## Evening Song<sup>2</sup>

Look off, dear Love, across the sallow sands,  
 And mark yon meeting of the sun and sea,

7. Poems; originally runes were verses written in ancient characters used by the Norsemen.

8. A musical composition generally having several themes, enunciated in turn, and gradually reaching a marked climax at the end.

9. A parchment from which writing has been erased to make space for another text.

1. During the flood Noah sent the dove

from the ark, seeking land. On the seventh day the dove returned with an olive leaf (Genesis viii: 8-11).

2. Written at West Chester, Pennsylvania, in the autumn of 1876, in response to a request from Dudley Buck for a song to be set to music. It was published in *Lippincott's* for January, 1877, and reprinted in *Poems of Sidney Lanier* (1884). It was also published with Buck's music as "Sunset."

How long they kiss in sight of all the lands.  
Ah! longer, longer, we.

Now in the sea's red vintage melts the sun,  
As Egypt's pearl<sup>3</sup> dissolved in rosy wine,  
And Cleopatra night drinks all. 'Tis done, 5  
Love, lay thine hand in mine.

Come forth, sweet stars, and comfort heaven's heart;  
Glimmer, ye waves, round else unlighted sands. 10  
O night! divorce our sun and sky apart  
Never our lips, our hands.

1876

1877, 1884

### Song of the Chattahoochee<sup>8</sup>

Out of the hills of Habersham,  
Down the valleys of Hall,<sup>9</sup>  
I hurry amain to reach the plain,  
Run the rapid and leap the fall,  
Split at the rock and together again, 5  
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,  
And flee from folly on every side  
With a lover's pain to attain the plain  
Far from the hills of Habersham,  
Far from the valleys of Hall. 10

All down the hills of Habersham,  
All through the valleys of Hall,  
The rushes cried *Abide, abide*,  
The willful waterweeds held me thrall,  
The laving laurel turned my tide, 15  
The ferns and the fondling grass said *Stay*,  
The dewberry dipped for to work delay,  
And the little reeds sighed *Abide, abide*,  
*Here in the hills of Habersham*,  
*Here in the valleys of Hall.* 20

3. The second stanza alludes to the tradition that Cleopatra dissolved a pearl in her cup to toast Anthony's health.

8. The Chattahoochee is a small river in Lanier's native Georgia. The poet considered music and poetry to be a single and natural expression of his ideal theory of unity. He conceived of nature, society, and moral obligation as being unified by a single compul-

sion, as is the river, personified in its life-giving journey from its source to the great sea of eternity. This poem was published in the *Independent* for December 20, 1883, and reprinted with emendations in *Poems of Sidney Lanier* (1884).

9. Habersham is a county in the northeastern section of Georgia; Hall County is slightly to the southwest of it.

High o'er the hills of Habersham,  
 Veiling the valleys of Hall,  
 The hickory told me manifold  
 Fair tales of shade, the poplar tall  
 Wrought me her shadowy self to hold, 25  
 The chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine,  
 Overleaning, with flickering meaning and sign,  
 Said, *Pass not, so cold, these manifold*  
*Deep shades of the hills of Habersham,*  
*These glades in the valleys of Hall.* 30

And oft in the hills of Habersham,  
 And oft in the valleys of Hall,  
 The white quartz shone, and the smooth brook-stone  
 Did bar me of passage with friendly brawl,  
 And many a luminous jewel lone 35  
 —Crystals clear or a-cloud with mist,  
 Ruby, garnet and amethyst—  
 Made lures with the lights of streaming stone  
 In the clefts of the hills of Habersham,  
 In the beds of the valleys of Hall. 40

But oh, not the hills of Habersham,  
 And oh, not the valleys of Hall  
 Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.  
 Downward the voices of Duty call—  
 Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main, 45  
 The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,  
 And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,  
 And the lordly main from beyond the plain  
 Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,  
 Calls through the valleys of Hall. 50

1877

1883, 1884

## EMILY DICKINSON

(1830–1886)

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts, where her grandfather had been a leader in founding Amherst College. Her father, Edward Dickinson, a successful lawyer who became a

member of Congress, served the college as a trustee, and was its treasurer for forty years. Though reported a stern and authoritarian moralist, he was perhaps no more patriarchal than other fathers of his time; but when he



spoke, his timid wife "trembled, obeyed, and was silent." The conservative Amherst of that day, in which the church wielded the highest authority, was a small and rigid world, ideally constructed to provoke the rebelliousness latent in Emily Dickinson's spirit. Like her sister Lavinia, Emily never married; Austin, her lawyer brother, having surrendered to his father's opposition to his going west, opposed him by marrying Susan Gilbert, a "worldly" New Yorker, who became Emily's confidante. In her poems Emily Dickinson constructed her own world—of the garden and the beautiful Connecticut valley scenery; of the books, many of them forbidden, smuggled in by her brother; of her private and quite startling thoughts; for a time, of her few congenial friends at Amherst Academy. For less than a year (1847) she went over the hills to South Hadley Female Seminary (Mount Holyoke), but failing to respond to the academic severity of the famous Mary Lyon, she returned to Amherst, which she never again left, except for brief visits to Washington, Philadelphia, and Boston in the earlier years.

On her return from South Hadley, Emily may have fallen in love with young Ben Newton, who in 1848 was living with her family as her father's law apprentice. He was a brilliant freethinker, and introduced her to a new world of ideas; but he was too poor to marry, even if her father could conceivably have given approval. He died of tuberculosis five years later, having begun his practice in another

town some distance away. In such poems as "My life closed twice before its close," however, Emily Dickinson acknowledges at least two persons in that complex and passionate world that her imagination created, perhaps to fill the void of not-having. According to the family tradition she met the Reverend Charles Wadsworth in Philadelphia in 1854, on one of her rare journeys, when she was on the way to visit her father, then in Washington for his term in Congress. Since Ben Newton had just died, and Emily was seeking spiritual assurance, it may have been Wadsworth who "tried to teach me immortality," as she wrote of someone not named, who afterward "left the land." Although married, Wadsworth continued to visit Emily in Amherst until 1862, when he accepted a call to California. The poet's family and friends as biographers supported the Amherst legend that Emily spent her middle years as a white-clad recluse. However, new evidence continues to indicate that the poet's human associations were more continuous and varied than was before supposed, substantiating the passionate impulsiveness which animated her poetry as a whole. In her writing she was encouraged by her girlhood friend Helen Hunt Jackson, famous author of *Ramona*; and after 1862 by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a literary friend of the family, who tried unsuccessfully to "improve" her unconventional style; she had the advice of Samuel Bowles, editor of the famous Springfield *Republican*, but probably no more than seven of

her poems slipped into print during her lifetime. It was probably just as well. Readers of the twentieth century would understand her better, for it was their idiom that she spoke.

From 1884 until her death on May 16, 1886, Emily Dickinson was a semi-invalid, in a condition of mental decline. Three posthumous collections between 1890 and 1896 won her the reputation of a powerful eccentric; later collections of her poems, beginning in 1914, established her recognition as a major poet and her immediate influence upon those young writers who were then creating the radical poetry of the present century. By the instinct of the artist she had found her own way, in the 1860's, toward forms of expression which only became naturalized in the iconoclastic 1920's. Her style was simple yet passionate, and marked by economy and concentration. Like the later generation she discovered that the sharp, intense image is the poet's best instrument. She anticipated the modern enlargement of melody by assonance, dissonance, and "off-rhyme"; she discovered, as our contemporaries did, the utility of the ellipsis of thought and the verbal ambiguity. Her ideas were witty, rebellious, and original, yet she confined her materials to the world of her small village, her domestic circle, her garden, and a few good books. She possessed the most acute awareness of sensory experience and psychological actualities, and she expressed radical discoveries in these areas with frankness and force. Confronted with the question of

how, in her narrow life, she came by these instruments and this knowledge, one can only conclude that it was by sheer genius. She remains incomparable because her originality sets her apart from all others, but her poems shed the unmistakable light of greatness.

Excepting seven poems that appeared in periodicals, Emily Dickinson's poetry was published posthumously. The definitive edition is *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 3 vols., 1955, which includes variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts. With the kind permission of the Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, the present edition follows Johnson's chronology and adopts his numbering of the poems; and the text used is that established by Johnson, except that capitalization and punctuation are regularized, as Johnson suggests Emily Dickinson would have expected had her poems been published in her lifetime. In the cases where the poet herself left variant readings of single words, the choice of previous editors is generally adopted.

Thomas H. Johnson has edited *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, 3 vols., 1958. For excellent accounts of Emily Dickinson's life see George F. Whicher, *This Was a Poet*, 1938; and Thomas H. Johnson, *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography*, 1955. Genevieve Taggard, *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson*, 1930, is a sound study. Millicent T. Bingham, *Ancestors' Brocades*, 1945, gives intimate revelations of the Dickinson family. Good critical interpretations are Richard Chase, *Emily Dickinson, American Men of Letters Series*, 1951; Henry W. Wells, *Introduction to Emily Dickinson*, 1947; Charles R. Anderson, *Emily Dickinson's Poetry: Stairway to Surprise*, 1960; and Jay Leyda, *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*, 1960.

## J. 49

I never lost as much but twice,  
And that was in the sod;  
Twice have I stood a beggar  
Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending, 5  
Reimbursed my store.  
Burglar, banker, father,  
I am poor once more!  
1858? 1890

J. 67

Success is counted sweetest  
By those who ne'er succeed.  
To comprehend a nectar  
Requires sorest need.  
Not one of all the purple host 5  
Who took the flag to-day  
Can tell the definition,  
So clear, of victory,  
As he, defcated, dying,  
On whose forbidden car 10  
The distant strains of triumph  
Burst agonized and clear!  
1859 1878, 1890

J. 76

Exultation is the going  
Of an inland soul to sea,—  
Past the houses, past the head-  
lands,  
Into deep eternity!

Bred as we, among the moun-  
tains, 5  
Can the sailor understand  
The divine intoxication  
Of the first league out from  
land?  
1859? 1890

J. 130

These are the days when birds  
come back,

A very few, a bird or two,  
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies  
resume  
The old, old sophistries of  
June,— 5  
A blue and gold mistake.

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the  
bee,  
Almost thy plausibility  
Induces my belief,

Till ranks of seeds their witness  
bear, 10  
And softly through the altered  
air  
Hurries a timid leaf!

Oh, sacrament of summer days,  
Oh, last communion in the  
haze,  
Permit a child to join, 15

Thy sacred emblems to partake,  
Thy consecrated bread to take  
And thine immortal wine!  
1859? 1890

J. 148

All overgrown by cunning moss,  
All interspersed with weed,  
The little cage of "Currer Bell,"<sup>1</sup>  
In quiet Haworth laid.

This bird, observing others, 5  
When frosts too sharp be-  
came,  
Retire to other latitudes,  
Quietly did the same.

1. Charlotte Brontë, British novelist (1816-1855), wrote under the name of "Currer Bell." She lived in Haworth, Yorkshire (see next line).

But differed in returning;  
 Since Yorkshire hills are  
     green, <sup>10</sup>  
 Yet not in all the nests I meet  
     Can nightingale be seen.

Gathered from any wanderings,  
 Gethsemane<sup>2</sup> can tell  
 Through what transporting ang-  
     guish <sup>15</sup>  
 She reached the asphodel!<sup>3</sup>

Soft falls the sounds of Eden  
 Upon her puzzled ear;  
 Oh, what an afternoon for  
     heaven, <sup>19</sup>  
 When Brontë entered there!<sup>4</sup>  
 1859? <sup>1896</sup>

## J. 160

Just lost when I was saved!  
 Just felt the world go by!  
 Just girt me for the onset with  
     eternity,  
 When breath blew back,  
 And on the other side <sup>5</sup>  
 I heard recede the disappointed  
     tide!

Therefore, as one returned, I  
     feel,  
 Odd secrets of the line to tell!  
 Some sailor, skirting foreign  
     shores,  
 Some pale reporter from the  
     awful doors <sup>10</sup>

Before the seal!

2. A garden outside Jerusalem, where  
 Christ suffered agony before his be-  
 trayal and arrest (Matthew xxvi: 36).

3. In Greek mythology the flower of the  
 Elysian Fields, where the worthy dead  
 enjoy complete happiness.

4. "One may conjecture that ED in-  
 tended a three-stanza poem but re-  
 mained uncertain whether the version  
 she preferred should consist of the first  
 stanza plus the two stanzas preceding  
 her division [after line 12] or the two  
 following" [Johnson's note].

Next time, to stay!  
 Next time, the things to see  
 By ear unheard,  
 Unscrutinized by eye. <sup>15</sup>

Next time, to tarry,  
 While the ages steal,—  
 Slow tramp the centuries,  
 And the cycles wheel.  
 1860? <sup>1891</sup>

## J. 162

My river runs to thee:  
 Blue sea, wilt welcome me?  
 My river waits reply.  
 Oh sea, look graciously!  
 I'll fetch thee brooks <sup>5</sup>  
 From spotted nooks,—  
 Say, sea. Take me!  
 1860? <sup>1890</sup>

## J. 182

If I shouldn't be alive  
 When the robins come,  
 Give the one in red cravat  
 A memorial crumb.  
 If I couldn't thank you, <sup>5</sup>  
 Being fast asleep,  
 You will know I'm trying  
 With my granite lip!  
 1860? <sup>1890</sup>

## J. 214

I taste a liquor never brewed,  
 From tankards scooped in pearl;  
 Not all the vats upon the Rhine  
 Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I, <sup>5</sup>  
 And debauchee of dew,

Reeling, through endless summer  
days,  
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the  
drunken bee  
Out of the foxglove's door, 10  
When butterflies renounce their  
drams,  
I shall but drink the more!

Till scraps swing their snowy  
hats,  
And saints to windows run,  
To see the little tippler 15  
Leaning against the sun!  
1860? 1861, 1890

J. 241

I like a look of agony,  
Because I know it's true;  
Men do not sham convulsion,  
Nor simulate a throe.

The eyes glaze once, and that is  
death. 5  
Impossible to feign  
The beads upon the forehead  
By homely anguish strung.  
1861? 1890

J. 252

I can wade grief,  
Whole pools of it,—  
I'm used to that.  
But the least push of joy  
Breaks up my feet, 5  
And I tip—drunken.  
Let no pebble smile,  
'T was the new liquor,—  
That was all!

Power is only pain, 10  
Stranded, through discipline,  
Till weights will hang.  
Give balm to giants,  
And they'll wilt, like men.  
Give Himmaleh,<sup>5</sup>— 15  
They'll carry him!  
1861? 1891

J. 258

There's a certain slant of light,  
Winter afternoons,  
That oppresses, like the heft  
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us; 5  
We can find no scar,  
But internal difference  
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it any:  
'T is the seal, despair,— 10  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape  
listens,  
Shadows hold their breath;  
When it goes, 'tis like the  
distance 15  
On the look of death.  
1861? 1890

J. 285

The robin's my criterion for tune  
Because I grow where robins  
do—  
But were I Cuckoo born  
I'd swear by him—

5. A personification of the Himalayas.  
mountains in India, imagined as a god  
in Hindu mythology.

The ode familiar rules the  
noon. 5

The Buttercup's my whim for  
bloom—

Because we're orchard-sprung—

But were I Britain-born

I'd daisies spurn—

None but the nut October fit 10

Because through dropping it

The seasons flit, I'm taught.

Without the snow's tableau

Winter were lie to me—

Because I see New Englandly. 15

The Queen discerns like me—

Provincially.

1861?

1929

### J. 288

I'm nobody! Who are you?

Are you nobody, too?

Then there's a pair of us—don't  
tell!

They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody! 5

How public, like a frog

To tell your name the livelong

June

To an admiring bog!

1861?

1891

### J. 303

The soul selects her own society,

Then shuts the door;

To her divine majority

Present no more.

Unmoved, she notes the chariots  
pausing 5

At her low gate;

Unmoved, an emperor be kneel-  
ing

Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample  
nation

Choose one; 10

Then close the valves of her  
attention

Like stone.

1862?

1890

### J. 318

I'll tell you how the sun rose,—  
A ribbon at a time.

The steeples swam in amethyst,

The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets, 5

The bobolinks begun.

Then I said softly to myself,

"That must have been the sun!"

But how he set, I know not.

There seemed a purple stile 10

Which little yellow boys and  
girls

Were climbing all the while

Till when they reached the other  
side,

A dominic<sup>6</sup> in gray 14

Put gently up the evening bars,

And led the flock away.

1860?

1890

### J. 322

There came a day at summer's  
full

Entirely for me;

I thought that such were for the  
saints,

Where resurrections be.

6. A pastor or clergyman.

The sun, as common, went  
abroad, 5  
The flowers, accustomed, blew,  
As if no soul the solstice passed  
That maketh all things new.

The time was scarce profaned  
by speech;  
The symbol of a word 10  
Was needless, as at sacrament  
The wardrobe of our Lord.

Each was to each the sealed  
church,  
Permitted to commune this  
time,  
Lest we too awkward show 15  
At supper of the Lamb.

The hours slid fast, as hours will,  
Clutched tight by greedy hands;  
So faces on two decks look back,  
Bound to opposing lands. 20

And so, when all the time had  
leaked  
Without external sound,  
Each bound the other's crucifix,  
We gave no other bond.

Sufficient troth that we shall  
rise— 25  
Deposed, at length, the grave—  
To that new marriage, justified  
Through Calvaries of Love!  
1862 1890

J. 324

Some keep the Sabbath going to  
church;  
I keep it staying at home,  
With a bobolink for a chorister,  
And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in sur-  
plice; 5  
I just wear my wings,  
And instead of tolling the bell  
for church,  
Our little sexton sings.  
God preaches,—a noted clergy-  
man,—  
And the sermon is never  
long; 10  
So instead of getting to heaven  
at last,  
I'm going all along!  
1860? 1864, 1890

J. 328

A bird came down the walk:  
He did not know I saw;  
He bit an angle-worm in halves  
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew 5  
From a convenient grass,  
And then hopped sideways to  
the wall  
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes  
That hurried all around— 10  
They looked like frightened  
beads, I thought  
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,  
I offered him a crumb,  
And he unrolled his feathers 15  
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,  
Too silver for a scam,  
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,  
Leap, plashless, as they swim. 20  
1862 1891

## J. 333

The grass so little has to do,—  
A sphere of simple green,  
With only butterflies to brood,  
And bees to entertain,

And stir all day to pretty  
tunes 5

The breezes fetch along,  
And hold the sunshine in its lap  
And bow to everything;

And thread the dews all night,  
like pearls,

And make itself so fine,— 10  
A duchess were too common  
For such a noticing.

And even when it dies, to pass  
In odors so divine,  
Like lowly spices lain to sleep, 15  
Or spikenards perishing.

And then in sovereign barns to  
dwell,

And dream the days away,—  
The grass so little has to do,  
I wish I were a hay. 20

1862 1890

## J. 341

After great pain a formal feel-  
ing comes—

The nerves sit ceremonious like  
tombs;

The stiff Heart questions—was  
it He that bore?

And yesterday—or centuries be-  
fore? 4

The feet, mechanical, go round  
A wooden way  
Of ground, or air, or ought,<sup>6</sup>

6. Nothing.

Regardless grown,  
A quartz contentment, like a  
stone.

This is the hour of lead 10  
Remembered if outlived,  
As freezing persons recollect the  
snow—

First chill, then stupor, then the  
letting go.

1862 1929

## J. 401

What soft, cherubic creatures  
These gentlewomen are!  
One would as soon assault a  
plush  
Or violate a star.

Such dimity convictions, 5  
A horror so refined  
Of freckled human nature,  
Of Deity ashamed,—

It's such a common glory,  
A fisherman's degree! 10  
Redemption, brittle lady,  
Be so, ashamed of thee.

1862? 1896

## J. 435

Much madness is divinest sense  
To a discerning eye;  
Much sense the starkest mad-  
ness.

'T is the majority  
In this, as all, prevail. 5

Assent, and you are sane;  
Demur,—you're straightway dan-  
gerous,  
And handled with a chain.

1862? 1890



J. 441

This is my letter to the world,  
That never wrote to me,—  
The simple news that Nature  
told,  
With tender majesty.

Her message is committed 5  
To hands I cannot see,  
For love of her, sweet country-  
men,  
Judge tenderly of me!  
1862 1890

J. 449

I died for beauty, but was scarce  
Adjusted in the tomb,  
When one who died for truth  
was lain  
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I  
failed? 5  
“For beauty,” I replied.  
“And I for truth—themselves are  
one—  
We brethren are,” he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a night,  
We talked between the  
rooms, 10  
Until the moss had reached our  
lips,  
And covered up our names.  
1862? 1890

J. 465

I heard a fly buzz when I died—  
The stillness in the room  
Was like the stillness in the air  
Between the heavens of storm.

The eyes around had wrung  
them dry 5  
And breaths were gathering firm  
For that last onset when the  
King  
Be witnessed in the room.

I willed my keepsakes, signed  
away  
What portion of me be 10  
Assignable—and then it was  
There interposed a fly,  
With blue, uncertain, stumbling  
buzz,  
Between the light and me.  
And then the windows failed,  
and then 15  
I could not see to see.  
1862? 1896

J. 478

I had no time to hate—  
Because  
The grave would hinder me,  
And life was not so  
Ample I 5  
Could finish enmity.

Nor had I time to love—  
But since  
Some industry must be,  
The little toil of love, 10  
I thought,  
Be large enough for me.  
1862? 1890

J. 511

If you<sup>7</sup> were coming in the fall,  
I'd brush the summer by

7. A possible reference to Charles Wadsworth, who had moved to California.

With half a smile and half a  
spurn,  
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year, 5  
I'd wind the months in balls,  
And put them each in separate  
drawers,

For fear the numbers fuse.

If only centuries delayed,  
I'd count them on my hand, 10  
Subtracting till my fingers  
dropped  
Into Van Diemen's Land.<sup>8</sup>

If certain, when this life was out,  
That yours and mine should be,  
I'd toss it yonder like a rind, 15  
And taste eternity.

But, now, uncertain of the  
length

Of this that is between,  
It goads me, like the goblin bee,  
That will not state its sting. 20

1862 1890

## J. 526

To hear an oriole sing  
May be a common thing,  
Or only a divine.

It is not of the bird  
Who sings the same, unheard, 5  
As unto crowd.

The fashion of the ear  
Attireth that it hear  
In dun or fair.

So whether it be rune, 10  
Or whether it be none,  
Is of within;

8. Tasmania, an island off southeastern Australia, was then being settled, and was regarded as being extremely remote.

The "tune is in the tree,"  
The sceptic showeth me;  
"No, sir! In thee!" 15

1862? 1891

## J. 528

Mine, by the right of the white  
election!

Mine, by the royal seal!

Mine, by the sign in the scarlet  
prison,

Bars cannot conceal!

Mine, here in vision and in  
veto! 5

Mine, by the grave's repeal

Titled, confirmed—

Delirious charter!

Mine, long as Ages steal!

1862? 1890

## J. 547

I've seen a dying eye  
Run round and round a room  
In search of something, as it  
seemed,

Then cloudier become;  
And then, obscure with fog, 5  
And then be soldered down  
Without disclosing what it be,  
'T were blessed to have seen.

1862? 1890

## J. 556

The brain within its groove

Runs evenly and true;

But let a splinter swerve,

'T were easier for you

To put the waters back 5  
When floods have slit the hills,

And scooped a turnpike for  
themselves,  
And blotted out the mills!  
1862? 1890

J. 579

I had been hungry all the years;  
My noon had come, to dine;  
I, trembling, drew the table near,  
And touched the curious wine.

'T was this on tables I had  
seen, 5  
When turning, hungry, home  
I looked in windows, for the  
wealth  
I could not hope for mine.

I did not know the ample bread,  
'T was so unlike the crumb 10  
The birds and I had often shared  
In Nature's dining-room.

The plenty hurt me, 't was so  
new,—  
Myself felt ill and odd,  
As berry of a mountain bush 15  
Transplanted to the road.

Nor was I hungry; so I found  
That hunger was a way  
Of persons outside windows,  
The enterer takes away. 20  
1862? 1891

J. 581

I found the phrase to every  
thought  
I ever had, but one;  
And that defies me,  
As a hand did try to chalk the  
sun.

To races nurtured in the  
dark;— 5  
How would your own begin?  
Can blaze be done in cochineal,<sup>9</sup>  
Or noon in mazarin?<sup>2</sup>  
1862? 1891

J. 585

I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step  
Around a pile of mountains, 5  
And, supercilious, peer  
In shanties by the sides of roads;  
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides  
And crawl between 10  
Complaining all the while  
In horrid, hooting stanza;  
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;<sup>2</sup>  
Then, punctual as a star, 15  
Stop—docile and omnipo-  
tent—  
At its own stable door.  
1862? 1891

J. 636

The way I read a letter's this:  
'T is first I lock the door,  
And push it with my fingers  
next,  
For transport it be sure.

And then I go the furthest off 5  
To counteract a knock;

9. A red dye.

1. Reddish-blue.

2. A surname meaning "sons of thunder," given by Christ to James and John (Mark iii: 17).

Then draw my little letter forth  
And slowly pick the lock.

Then, glancing narrow at the  
wall,

And narrow at the floor, 10  
For firm conviction of a mouse  
Not exorcised before,

Peruse how infinite I am  
To—no one that you know!  
And sigh for lack of heaven,—  
but not 15

The heaven God bestow.  
1862? 1891

## J. 640

I cannot live with you,<sup>3</sup>  
It would be life,  
And life is over there  
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to, 5  
Putting up  
Our life, his porcelain,  
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,  
Quaint or broke; 10  
A newer Sèvres<sup>4</sup> pleases,  
Old ones crack.

I could not die with you,  
For one must wait  
To shut the other's gaze  
down,— 15  
You could not.

And I, could I stand by  
And see you freeze,  
Without my right of frost,  
Death's privilege? 20

3. The references to Christian ministry associate this poem with Wadsworth.  
4. A fine porcelain made in the French town of that name.

Nor could I rise with you,  
Because your face  
Would put out Jesus',  
That new grace

Glow plain and foreign 25  
On my homesick eye,  
Except that you, than he  
Shone closer by.

They'd judge us—how?  
For you served Heaven, you  
know, 30  
Or sought to;  
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,  
And I had no more eyes  
For sordid excellence 35  
As Paradise.

And were you lost, I would be,  
Though my name  
Rang loudest  
On the heavenly fame. 40

And were you saved,  
And I condemned to be  
Where you were not,  
That self were hell to me.

So we must meet apart, 45  
You there, I here,  
With just the door ajar  
That oceans are, and prayer,  
And that white sustenance,  
Despair. 50  
1862? 1890

## J. 650

Pain has an element of blank;  
It cannot recollect  
When it begun, or if there were  
A day when it was not.

It has no future but itself, 5  
Its infinite contain

Its past, enlightened to perceive  
New periods of pain.  
1862? 1890

J. 701

A thought went up my mind to-  
day  
That I have had before,  
But did not finish,—some way  
back,  
I could not fix the year,  
Nor where it went, nor why it  
came 5  
The second time to me,  
Nor definitely what it was,  
Have I the art to say.  
But somewhere in my soul, I  
know  
I've met the thing before; 10  
It just reminded me—'t was  
all—  
And came my way no more.  
1863? 1891

J. 712

Because I could not stop for  
Death,  
He kindly stopped for me;  
The carriage held but just our-  
selves  
And Immortality.  
We slowly drove, he knew no  
haste, 5  
And I had put away  
My labor, and my leisure too,  
For his civility.  
We passed the school, where  
children strove  
At recess, in the ring; 10

We passed the fields of gazing  
grain,  
We passed the setting sun.  
Or rather, he passed us;  
The dews grew quivering and  
chill,  
For only gossamer my gown, 15  
My tippet only tulle.  
We paused before a house that  
seemed  
A swelling of the ground;  
The roof was scarcely visible,  
The cornice in the ground. 20  
Since then 'tis centuries, and yet  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses' heads  
Were toward eternity.  
1863? 1890

J. 732

She rose to his requirement,  
dropped  
The playthings of her life  
To take the honorable work  
Of woman and of wife.  
If aught she missed in her new  
day 5  
Of amplitude, or awe,  
Or first prospective, or the gold  
In using wear away,  
It lay unmentioned, as the sea  
Develops pearl and weed, 10  
But only to himself is known  
The fathoms they abide.  
1863? 1890

J. 816

A death-blow is a life-blow to  
some

Who, till they died, did not  
 alive become;  
 Who, had they lived, had died,  
 but when  
 They died, vitality begun.  
 1864? 1891

## J. 823

Not what we did shall be the  
 test  
 When act and will are done,  
 But what our Lord infers we  
*would*—  
 Had we diviner been.  
 1864? 1929

## J. 986

A narrow fellow in the grass  
 Occasionally rides;  
 You may have met him? Did you  
 not  
 His notice sudden is.  
 The grass divides as with a  
 comb, 5  
 A spotted shaft is seen;  
 And then it closes at your feet  
 And opens further on.  
 He likes a boggy acre,  
 A floor too cool for corn, 10  
 Yet when a boy, and barefoot,  
 I more than once, at noon  
 Have passed, I thought, a whip-  
 lash  
 Unbraiding in the sun,—  
 When, stooping to secure it, 15  
 It wrinkled, and was gone.  
 Several of nature's people  
 I know, and they know me;  
 I feel for them a transport  
 Of cordiality; 20

But never met this fellow,  
 Attended or alone,  
 Without a tighter breathing,  
 And zero at the bone.  
 1865 1866, 1891

## J. 1052

I never saw a moor,  
 I never saw the sea;  
 Yet know I how the heather  
 looks,  
 And what a billow be.  
 I never spoke with God, 5  
 Nor visited in heaven;  
 Yet certain am I of the spot  
 As if the cheeks were given.  
 1865? 1890

## J. 1078

The bustle in a house  
 The morning after death  
 Is solemnest of industries  
 Enacted upon earth,—  
 The sweeping up the heart, 5  
 And putting love away  
 We shall not want to use again  
 Until eternity.  
 1866? 1890

## J. 1082

Revolution is the pod  
 Systems rattle from  
 When the winds of Will are  
 stirred.  
 Excellent is bloom,  
 But except its russet base, 5  
 Every summer be  
 The entomber of itself.  
 So of Liberty:

Left inactive on the stalk,  
All its purple fled, 10  
Revolution shakes it for  
Test if it be dead.  
1866? 1929

And we, we placed the hair, 25  
And drew the head erect;  
And then an awful leisure was,  
Our faith to regulate.  
1866? 1890

J. 1100

The last night that she lived,<sup>5</sup>  
It was a common night,  
Except the dying; this to us  
Made nature different.

We noticed smallest things,— 5  
Things overlooked before,  
By this great light upon our  
minds  
Italicized, as 't were.

As we went out and in  
Between her final room 10  
And rooms where those to be  
alive  
Tomorrow were, a blame

That others could exist  
While she must finish quite,  
A jealousy for her arose 15  
So nearly infinite.

We waited while she passed;  
It was a narrow time,  
Too jostled were our souls to  
speak,  
At length the notice came. 20

She mentioned, and forgot;  
Then lightly as a reed  
Bent to the water, shivered  
scarce,  
Consented, and was dead.

5. "On Thursday, 3 May 1866, Laura Dickey (Mrs. Frank W.) of Michigan, youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Hills, died at her parents' home in Amherst. The Hills land lay next to the Dickinsons on the East" [Johnson's note].

J. 1176

We never know how high we are  
'Till we are called to rise;  
And then, if we are true to plan,  
Our statures touch the skies.

The heroism we recite 5  
Would be a daily thing,  
Did not ourselves the cubits warp  
For fear to be a king.  
1870? 1896

J. 1207

He preached upon "breadth" till  
it argued him narrow,—  
The broad are too broad to de-  
fine;  
And of "truth" until it pro-  
claimed him a liar,—  
The truth never flaunted a sign.

Simplicity fled from this coun-  
terfeit presence 5  
As gold the pyrites<sup>6</sup> would shun.  
What confusion would cover  
the innocent Jesus  
To meet so enabled a man!  
1872 1891

J. 1263

There is no frigate like a book,  
To take us lands away,

6. Iron pyrites, sometimes mistaken for gold, and known as "fool's gold."

Nor any coursers like a page  
Of prancing poetry.

This traverse may the poorest  
take

Without oppress of toll; 5

How frugal is the chariot  
That bears a human soul!

1873? 1873, 1894

## J. 1304

Not with a club the heart is  
broken,

Nor with a stone;

A whip, so small you could not  
see it,

I've known

To lash the magic creature 5  
Till it fell,

Yet that whip's name

Too noble then to tell.

Magnanimous as bird

By boy descried, 10

Singing unto the stone

Of which it died.

Shame need not crouch

In such an earth as ours—

Shame, stand erect, 15

The universe is yours.

1874? 1896, 1947

## J. 1332

Pink, small, and punctual,<sup>7</sup>

Aromatic, low,

Covert in April,

Candid in May,

Dear to the moss, 5

Known to the knoll,

7. "(With the first *Arbutus*.)" [Dickinson's note].

Next to the robin  
In every human soul.

Bold little beauty,  
Bedecked with thee, 10

Nature forswears

Antiquity.

1875? 1890

## J. 1463

A route of evanescence

With a revolving wheel;

A resonance of emerald,

A rush of cochineal;<sup>8</sup>

And every blossom on the bush 5

Adjusts its tumbled head,—

The mail from Tunis, probably,

An easy morning's ride.

1879? 1891

## J. 1465

Before you thought of spring,

Except as a surmise,

You see, God bless his sudden-  
ness,

A fellow in the skies

Of independent hues, 5

A little weather-worn,

Inspiring habiliments

Of indigo and brown.

With specimens of song,

As if for you to choose, 10

Discretion in the interval,

With gay delays he goes

To some superior tree

Without a single leaf,

And shouts for joy to nobody 15

But his scraphic self!

1879 1891

8. A red dye.



J. 1510

How happy is the little stone  
That rambles in the road alone,  
And doesn't care about careers,  
And exigencies never fears;  
Whose coat of elemental  
brown

A passing universe put on;  
And independent as the sun,  
Associates or glows alone,  
Fulfilling absolute decree  
In casual simplicity.<sup>9</sup>

1881?

1891

J. 1540

As imperceptibly as grief  
The summer lapsed away,—  
Too imperceptible, at last,  
To seem like perfidy.  
A quietness distilled,  
As twilight long begun,  
Or Nature, spending with her-  
self

Sequestered afternoon.  
The dusk drew earlier in,  
The morning foreign shone,—  
A courteous, yet harrowing grace,  
As guest that would be gone.

And thus, without a wing,  
Or service of a keel,  
Our summer made her light  
escape

Into the beautiful.

1865, 1882

1891

9. In a letter, probably to her sister-in-law, Emily Dickinson adds beneath the poem: "Heaven the Balm of a surly Technicality!" In a letter to T. W. Higginson she adds the separate quatrain (J. 1543): "Obtaining but our own extent / In whatsoever realm—/'Twas Christ's own personal expanse / That bore him from the tomb." Johnson notes that "the thought seems to be a reflection on the Calvinist orthodoxy that only the 'saved' get into heaven."

J. 1587

He ate and drank the precious  
words,  
His spirit grew robust;  
He knew no more that he was  
poor,  
Nor that his frame was dust.

He danced along the dingy  
days,  
And this bequest of wings  
Was but a book. What liberty  
A loosened spirit brings!

1883?

1890

J. 1624

Apparently with no surprise  
To any happy flower,  
The frost beheads it at its play  
In accidental power.

The blond assassin passes on,  
The sun proceeds unmoved  
To measure off another day  
For an approving God.

1884?

1890

J. 1732

My life closed twice before its  
close;

It remains to see  
If Immortality unveil  
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to con-  
ceive,

As these that twice befell.  
Parting is all we know of  
heaven,

And all we need of hell.

?

1896

J. 1760

Elysium<sup>1</sup> is as far as to  
 'The very nearest room,  
 If in that room a friend await  
 Felicity or doom.  
 1. Paradise.

What fortitude the soul con-  
 tains, 5  
 That it can so endure  
 The accent of a coming foot,  
 The opening of a door!  
 1882? 1890



# The Regional Realists

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SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS

(1835-1910)

The pattern of the life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, or "Mark Twain," for seventy-five years was the pattern of America—from frontier community to industrial urbanity, from river boats to railroads, from an aggressive, bumptious adolescence toward a troubled and powerful maturity. His intuitive and romantic response to that life was colored simultaneously by healthy skepticism and a strong suspicion that the geography and citizens of America were not conforming to scriptural patterns of the Promised Land. This discrepancy between the American expectation and the disturbing reality, to which many writers have reacted with bitterness, or with gloomy acceptance and alarms, provoked Mark Twain to adopt the critical weapons of the humorist.

The inheritor of an indigenous tradition of humor compounded of Indian and Negro legend, New England wryness and dryness, and frontier extravagance, Mark Twain spent his early years in an ideal location for such influences to mold his life and his writing. Hannibal, Missouri, strategically placed on the

banks of the Mississippi, in the period before the Civil War saw the commerce and travelers of a nation pass its wharfs and look westward from its streets. For a perceptive boy, such experiences were not to be forgotten, and later he preserved them in books that are world classics of the remembrance of a lost and happy time. His youth was typical of life in a fluid, diverse, yet morally exacting community in a chaotic period. His schooling was brief, and at eighteen he went to Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, doing itinerant newspaper work and sending his first travel letters to his brother Orion, who published them in his *Muscatine Journal*. He followed his brother to Keokuk, then moved on to Cincinnati, and from there embarked on an intended journey to South America, with the amusing results recounted in *Life on the Mississippi*. Once he was on the river, his boyhood ambition to be a pilot returned, and discarding all thoughts of the Amazon, he persuaded Horace Bixby, a famous pilot, to school him in the intricate art of Mississippi navigation. After

less than two years as a "cub," Twain received his pilot's license; the Civil War then put an end to piloting, but his nostalgic love of the river life was forever fixed in his pseudonym, "Mark Twain," the leadsmen's cry meaning a two-fathom sounding, or "safe water."

The Civil War brought change and tension to the Clemens family who were, like so many, divided in their loyalty and allegiance. Orion Clemens, a strong Union man, campaigned for Lincoln and was appointed secretary of the Nevada Territory. Troubled by his brother's inclination toward the southern tradition of the family, Orion persuaded him, rather easily, to go west as his assistant, although he did not need one. In 1861 they traveled by stagecoach across the plains to Carson City, a journey described with hilarious half-truth and half-fiction in *Roughing It*. Neither the political job nor subsequent ventures in mining were profitable, and Twain began contributing letters, signed "Josh," to the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, which led to his joining its staff in 1862. From that time he was to remain a writer, although he occasionally lectured and ventured into business on the side. The "Jumping Frog" story, now famous as "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," published in the *New York Saturday Press* in 1865, brought him national attention; on the West Coast he was already well known as a journalistic associate of Bret Harte and Artemus Ward, remembered for his humorous sketches in various

papers and for a successful repertorial trip to Hawaii. A commission from the *Alta California* to write a series of travel letters now enabled him for the first time to go to Europe.

Twain's excursion on the *Quaker City* to Europe and the Holy Land resulted in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), a best seller, followed by an equally successful lecture tour. In 1870, he married Olivia Langdon and settled down as editor of the *Buffalo Express*, but he soon moved to Hartford. His first effort at a novel, *The Gilded Age* (1873), written in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, was a bitter yet amusing narrative of post-Civil War political and business corruption, and offers interesting parallels with *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), a comic critique of society in a fantastic vein. These books, with their quizzical and detached humor, suggest Twain's ability to view his age with qualified affection while satirizing the economic and spiritual disorders, the narrow insularity, of mid-nineteenth-century America. Yet that American provincialism, exploited for comic effect in *The Innocents Abroad* and in the later travel books, *A Tramp Abroad* (1880) and the classic *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), never overshadowed his love of the American land and its people. That love, intensified by childhood memories, evoked his two unquestioned masterpieces.

*Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1885) combine recollections of Hannibal in Twain's youth, the spell of a

great river, and the intangible quality of an art that relies on simplicity for its greatest effect. On one level, the nostalgic account of childhood, on another, the social and moral record and judgment of an epoch in American history, the two books have attained the position of classics in the world's literature. They were followed by lesser works, such as *The American Claimant* (1892), *The £1,000,000 Bank-Note* (1893), *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896), and *Following the Equator* (1897), the last of the travel volumes. *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894) and *Tom Sawyer, Detective* (1896) ended Twain's employment of Huck and Tom in fiction.

The tradition of American humor, from colonial folk myth and *Poor Richard's Almanack*, to the Yankee wit of Lowell's *Biglow Papers*, spreading through the national press from Josh Billings, John Phoenix, Artemus Ward, and unnumbered, forgotten local humorists, followed the pattern of any folk literature in its immediate and intuitive response to cultural and social patterns. Mark Twain is America's greatest humorist not only because of his unsurpassed mastery of that essential pattern, but because his humor served to point up errors in American life—its gaucheries, pretenses, and political debilities—and at the same time expressed a faith in the American dream, optimistic and unquenchable.

The discrepancy between that dream and its questionable fulfillment, so obvious to the

writers of the twentieth century, found expression also in Mark Twain's personal life. His literary successes and popularity in America and abroad were contrasted with emotional complexities, tragic losses, and business disappointments; his later writings evidence a skepticism saved from petulance by a great artist's sincerity. *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg* (1900), reprinted below, and *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916) are indictments of more than national cupidity and hypocrisy; they are troubled inquiries into the nature of man himself. And they appear to be at strange variance with such books as *Tom Sawyer* unless the reader recognizes in Twain the dichotomy of personality that William Dean Howells may have had in mind when he called him "the Lincoln of our literature."

There is no complete edition of Mark Twain now in print, though several have been published, such as a uniform trade edition, the limp-leather edition of the same, and the Mississippi Edition—all having the same pagination. The Author's National Edition, in 25 vols., 1907-1918, has not been reprinted. The rare, but definitive edition is *The Writings of Mark Twain*, 37 vols., edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, 1922-1925. A good one-volume collection is *The Portable Mark Twain*, edited by Bernard De Voto, 1946. *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Life on the Mississippi* exist in several editions, and 4 *Connecticut Yankee*, *Roughing It*, and *Innocents Abroad* are readily available.

*Mark Twain's Autobiography*, edited by Charles Neider, 1959, includes material not in the 1924 edition by Albert Bigelow Paine, nor in *Mark Twain in Eruption*, edited by Bernard De Voto, 1940. The authorized life by Albert Bigelow Paine, *Mark Twain, A Biography*, 3 vols., 1912, was reissued in 1935. This is supplemented by DeLancey Ferguson, *Mark Twain, Man and Legend*, 1943; by Bernard De Voto, *Mark Twain's America*, 1932; and

by Dixon Wecter's *Sam Clemens of Hannibal*, 1952, a valuable study of the first eighteen years of the novelist's life. Important collections of correspondence are *Mark Twain's Letters*, 2 vols., edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, 1917; *The Love Letters of Mark Twain*, edited by Dixon Wecter, 1949; and *Mark Twain-Howells Letters*, 2 vols., edited by Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson, 1960. Charles Neider

collected *The Complete Short Stories*, 1957. Critical studies are E. Wagenknecht, *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work*, 1935; K. A. Lynn, *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor*, 1959; W. Blair, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn*, 1960; R. B. Salomon, *Twain and the Image of History*, 1961; and A. E. Stone, Jr., *The Innocent Eye* \* \* \*, 1961. See also E. Hudson Long, *Mark Twain Handbook*, 1958.

## From *Roughing It*<sup>1</sup>

[When the Buffalo Climbed a Tree]

Next morning just before dawn, when about five hundred and fifty miles from St. Joseph,<sup>2</sup> our mud-wagon<sup>3</sup> broke down. We were to be delayed five or six hours, and therefore we took horses, by invitation, and joined a party who were just starting on a buffalo hunt. It was noble sport galloping over the plain in the dewy freshness of the morning, but our part of the hunt ended in disaster and disgrace, for a wounded buffalo bull chased the passenger Bemis nearly two miles, and then he forsook his horse and took to a lone tree. He was very sullen about the matter for some twenty-four hours, but at last he began to soften little by little, and finally he said:

"Well, it was not funny, and there was no sense in those gawks making themselves so facetious over it. I tell you I was angry in earnest for awhile. I should have shot that long gangly lubber they called Hank, if I could have done it without crippling six or seven other people—but of course I couldn't, the old 'Allen'<sup>4</sup> 's so confounded comprehensive. I wish those loafers had been up in the tree; they wouldn't have wanted to laugh so. If I had had a horse worth a cent—but no, the minute he saw that buffalo bull wheel on him and give a bellow, he raised straight up in the air and stood on his heels. The saddle began to slip, and I took him round the neck and laid close to him, and began to pray. Then he came down and stood up on the other end awhile, and the bull actually stopped pawing sand and bellowing to contemplate the inhuman spectacle. Then the bull made a pass at him and uttered a bellow that sounded perfectly frightful, it was so close to me, and that seemed to literally prostrate my horse's reason, and make a raving distracted

1. The sketches in *Roughing It* were based on Twain's memories, generously intermingled with elements of the tall tale, of his overland trip to Nevada in 1861 in company with his brother Orion, who had been appointed secretary of the Nevada Territory. Orion kept a journal which Mark drew on for certain facts. The present text of *Roughing It* is based on the

first edition of 1872.

2. The Missouri gateway to the frontier, from which the overland stages started westward.

3. A less comfortable type of stage-coach, with open sides and simple benches.

4. A revolver named after its inventor, often called a "pepperbox" because it had six barrels.

maniac of him, and I wish I may die if he didn't stand on his head for a quarter of a minute and shed tears. He was absolutely out of his mind—he was, as sure as truth itself, and he really didn't know what he was doing. Then the bull came charging at us, and my horse dropped down on all fours and took a fresh start—and then for the next ten minutes he would actually throw one handspring after another so fast that the bull began to get unsettled, too, and didn't know where to start in—and so he stood there sneezing, and shoveling dust over his back, and bellowing every now and then, and thinking he had got a fifteen-hundred dollar circus horse for breakfast, certain. Well, I was first out on his neck—the horse's, not the bull's—and then underneath, and next on his rump, and sometimes head up, and sometimes heels—but I tell you it seemed solemn and awful to be ripping and tearing and carrying on so in the presence of death, as you might say. Pretty soon the bull made a snatch for us and brought away some of my horse's tail (I suppose, but do not know, being pretty busy at the time), but *something* made him hungry for solitude and suggested to him to get up and hunt for it. And then you ought to have seen that spider-legged old skeleton go! and you ought to have seen the bull cut out after him, too—head down, tongue out, tail up, bellowing like everything, and actually mowing down the weeds, and tearing up the earth, and boosting up the sand like a whirlwind! By George, it was a hot race! I and the saddle were back on the rump, and I had the bridle in my teeth and holding on to the pommel with both hands. First we left the dogs behind; then we passed a jackass rabbit;<sup>5</sup> then we overtook a cayote,<sup>6</sup> and were gaining on an antelope when the rotten girths let go and threw me about thirty yards off to the left, and as the saddle went down over the horse's rump he gave it a lift with his heels that sent it more than four hundred yards up in the air, I wish I may die in a minute if he didn't. I fell at the foot of the only solitary tree there was in nine counties adjacent (as any creature could see with the naked eye), and the next second I had hold of the bark with four sets of nails and my teeth, and the next second after that I was astraddle of the main limb and blaspheming my luck in a way that made my breath smell of brimstone. I *had* the bull, now, if he did not think of *one* thing. But that one thing I dreaded. I dreaded it very seriously. There was a possibility that the bull might not think of it, but there were greater chances that he would. I made up my mind what I would do in case he did. It was a little over forty feet to the ground from where I sat. I cautiously unwound the lariat from the pommel of my saddle—”

5. A large rabbit indigenous to the West, jokingly said to resemble a miniature donkey.

6. Twain's spelling for “coyote,” a prairie wolf.

"Your *saddle*? Did you take your saddle up in the tree with you?"

"Take it up in the tree with me? Why, how you talk. Of course I didn't. No man could do that. It *fell* in the tree when it came down."

"Oh—exactly."

"Certainly. I unwound the lariat, and fastened one end of it to the limb. It was the very best green raw-hide, and capable of sustaining tons. I made a slip-noose in the other end, and then hung it down to see the length. It reached down twenty-two feet—half way to the ground. I then loaded every barrel of the Allen with a double charge. I felt satisfied. I said to myself, if he never thinks of that one thing that I dread, all right—but if he does, all right anyhow—I am fixed for him. But don't you know that the very thing a man dreads is the thing that always happens? Indeed it is so. I watched the bull, now, with anxiety—anxiety which no one can conceive of who has not been in such a situation and felt that at any moment death might come. Presently a thought came into the bull's eye. I knew it! said I—if my nerve fails now, I am lost. Sure enough, it was just as I had dreaded, he started in to climb the tree—"

"What, the bull?"

"Of course—who else?"

"But a bull can't climb a tree."

"He can't, can't he? Since you know so much about it, did you ever see a bull try?"

"No! I never dreamt of such a thing."

"Well, then, what is the use of your talking that way, then? Because you never saw a thing done, is that any reason why it can't be done?"

"Well, all right—go on. What did you do?"

"The bull started up, and got along well for about ten feet, then slipped and slid back. I breathed easier. He tried it again—got up a little higher—slipped again. But he came at it once more, and this time he was careful. He got gradually higher and higher, and my spirits went down more and more. Up he came—an inch at a time—with his eyes hot, and his tongue hanging out. Higher and higher—hitched his foot over the stump of a limb, and looked up, as much as to say, 'You are my meat, friend.' Up again—higher and higher, and getting more excited the closer he got. He was within ten feet of me! I took a long breath,—and then said I, 'It is now or never.' I had the coil of the lariat all ready; I paid it out slowly, till it hung right over his head; all of a sudden I let go of the slack, and the slipnoose fell fairly round his neck! Quicker than lightning I out with the Allen and let him have it in the face. It was an awful roar, and must have scared the bull out of his senses. When the



smoke cleared away, there he was, dangling in the air, twenty foot from the ground, and going out of one convulsion into another faster than you could count! I didn't stop to count, anyhow—I shinned down the tree and shot for home."

"Bemis, is all that true, just as you have stated it?"

"I wish I may rot in my tracks and die the death of a dog if it isn't."

"Well, we can't refuse to believe it, and we don't. But if there were some proofs—"

"Proofs! Did I bring back my lariat?"

"No."

"Did I bring back my horse?"

"No."

"Did you ever see the bull again?"

"No."

"Well, then, what more do you want? I never saw anybody as particular as you are about a little thing like that."

I made up my mind that if this man was not a liar he only missed it by the skin of his teeth.

1872

### *From Life on the Mississippi<sup>7</sup>* *The Boys' Ambition<sup>8</sup>*

When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village<sup>9</sup> on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first negro minstrel show that ever came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that, if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in its turn; but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained.

Once a day a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis,

7. *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) is perhaps the finest literary treatment of a trade; it is also a poetic narrative in praise of the mighty Mississippi. The first half of the book—by far the better—is a nostalgic account of a boy's ambition to become a pilot and his experiences as a "cub" in the pilot house. The second half is a report of the author's recent journey on the river and of a visit to his old home. The Reverend Joseph Twichell, a lifelong friend, first suggested to Twain that his cub-pilot reminiscences would make

wonderful reading matter, and inspired with the idea, he immediately began "Old Times on the Mississippi" (Chapters IV–XVII of *Life on the Mississippi*), which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875. These selections are reprinted from the first edition of the book.

8. This is Chapter IV of *Life on the Mississippi*, and the first chapter of "Old Times on the Mississippi," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875.

9. "Hannibal, Missouri" [Twain's note].

and another downward from Keokuk.<sup>1</sup> Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. Not only the boys, but the whole village, felt this. After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep—with shingle-shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levee"; a pile of "skids" on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun; the dense forest away on the other side; the "point" above the town, and the "point" below, bounding the river-glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one. Presently a film of dark smoke appears above one of those remote "points"; instantly a negro drayman, famous for his quick eye and prodigious voice, lifts up the cry, "S-t-e-a-m-boat a-comin'!" and the scene changes! The town drunkard stirs, the clerks wake up, a furious clatter of drays follows, every house and store pours out a human contribution, and all in a twinkling the dead town is alive and moving. Drays, carts, men, boys, all go hurrying from many quarters to a common center, the wharf. Assembled there, the people fasten their eyes upon the coming boat as upon a wonder they are seeing for the first time. And the boat is rather a handsome sight, too. She is long and sharp and trim and pretty; she has two tall, fancy-topped chimneys, with a gilded device of some kind swung between them; a fanciful pilot-house, all glass and "gingerbread," perched on top of the "texas" deck<sup>2</sup> behind them; the paddle-boxes are gorgeous with a picture or with gilded rays above the boat's name; the boiler-deck, the hurricane-deck, and the texas deck are fenced and ornamented with clean white railings; there is a flag gallantly flying from the jack-staff; the furnace doors are open and the fires glaring bravely; the upper decks are black with passengers; the captain stands by the big bell, calm, imposing, the envy of all; great volumes of the blackest smoke are rolling and tumbling out of the chimneys—a husbanded grandeur created with a bit of pitch-pine

1. In southeastern Iowa.

2. The officers' quarters, largest on the

boat, were called the "texas," and the deck just over them the "texas deck."

just before arriving at a town; the crew are grouped on the fore-castle; the broad stage is run far out over the port bow, and an envied deck-hand stands picturesquely on the end of it with a coil of rope in his hand; the pent steam is screaming through the gauge-cocks; the captain lifts his hand, a bell rings, the wheels stop; then they turn back, churning the water to foam, and the steamer is at rest. Then such a scramble as there is to get aboard, and to get ashore, and to take in freight and to discharge freight, all at one and the same time; and such a yelling and cursing as the mates facilitate it all with! Ten minutes later the steamer is under way again, with no flag on the jack-staff and no black smoke issuing from the chimneys. After ten more minutes the town is dead again, and the town drunkard asleep by the skids once more.

My father was a justice of the peace, and I supposed he possessed the power of life and death over all men, and could hang anybody that offended him. This was distinction enough for me as a general thing; but the desire to be a steamboatman kept intruding, nevertheless. I first wanted to be a cabin-boy, so that I could come out with a white apron on and shake a table-cloth over the side, where all my old comrades could see me; later I thought I would rather be the deck-hand who stood on the end of the stage-plank with the coil of rope in his hand, because he was particularly conspicuous. But these were only day-dreams—they were too heavenly to be contemplated as real possibilities. By and by one of our boys went away. He was not heard of for a long time. At last he turned up as apprentice engineer or “striker” on a steamboat. This thing shook the bottom out of all my Sunday-school teachings. That boy had been notoriously worldly, and I just the reverse; yet he was exalted to this eminence, and I left in obscurity and misery. There was nothing generous about this fellow in his greatness. He would always manage to have a rusty bolt to scrub while his boat tarried at our town, and he would sit on the inside guard and scrub it, where we all could see him and envy him and loathe him. And whenever his boat was laid up he would come home and swell around the town in his blackest and greasiest clothes, so that nobody could help remembering that he was a steamboatman; and he used all sorts of steamboat technicalities in his talk, as if he were so used to them that he forgot common people could not understand them. He would speak of the “labboard” side of a horse in an easy, natural way that would make one wish he was dead. And he was always talking about “St. Looy” like an old citizen; he would refer casually to occasions when he was “coming down Fourth Street,” or when he was “passing by the Planter’s House,” or when there was a fire and he took a turn on the brakes of “the old Big Missouri”; and then he would go on and lie about how many towns

the size of ours were burned down there that day. Two or three of the boys had long been persons of consideration among us because they had been to St. Louis once and had a vague general knowledge of its wonders, but the day of their glory was over now. They lapsed into a humble silence, and learned to disappear when the ruthless "cub"-engineer approached. This fellow had money, too, and hair-oil. Also an ignorant silver watch and a showy brass watch-chain. He wore a leather belt and used no suspenders. If ever a youth was cordially admired and hated by his comrades, this one was. No girl could withstand his charms. He "cut out" every boy in the village. When his boat blew up at last, it diffused a tranquil contentment among us such as we had not known for months. But when he came home the next week, alive, renowned, and appeared in church all battered up and bandaged, a shining hero, stared at and wondered over by everybody, it seemed to us that the partiality of Providence for an undeserving reptile had reached a point where it was open to criticism.

This creature's career could produce but one result, and it speedily followed. Boy after boy managed to get on the river. The minister's son became an engineer. The doctor's and the post-master's sons became "mud clerks"; the wholesale liquor dealer's son became a barkeeper on a boat; four sons of the chief merchant, and two sons of the county judge, became pilots. Pilot was the grandest position of all. The pilot, even in those days of trivial wages, had a princely salary—from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and no board to pay. Two months of his wages would pay a preacher's salary for a year. Now some of us were left disconsolate. We could not get on the river—at least our parents would not let us.

So, by and by, I ran away. I said I would never come home again till I was a pilot and could come in glory. But somehow I could not manage it. I went meekly aboard a few of the boats that lay packed together like sardines at the long St. Louis wharf, and humbly inquired for the pilots, but got only a cold shoulder and short words from mates and clerks. I had to make the best of this sort of treatment for the time being, but I had comforting day-dreams of a future when I should be a great and honored pilot, with plenty of money, and could kill some of these mates and clerks and pay for them.

[A *Mississippi Cub-Pilot*]<sup>3</sup>

The boat backed out from New Orleans at four in the afternoon, and it was "our watch" until eight. Mr. Bixby, my chief, "straight-

3. From *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapters VI, and VII.

ened her up," plowed her along past the sterns of the other boats that lay at the Levee, and then said, "Here, take her; shave those steamships as close as you'd peel an apple." I took the wheel, and my heartbeat fluttered up into the hundreds; for it seemed to me that we were about to scrape the side off every ship in the line, we were so close. I held my breath and began to claw the boat away from the danger; and I had my own opinion of the pilot who had known no better than to get us into such peril, but I was too wise to express it. In half a minute I had a wide margin of safety intervening between the *Paul Jones* and the ships; and within ten seconds more I was set aside in disgrace, and Mr. Bixby was going into danger again and flaying me alive with abuse of my cowardice. I was stung, but I was obliged to admire the easy confidence with which my chief loafed from side to side of his wheel, and trimmed the ships so closely that disaster seemed ceaselessly imminent. When he had cooled a little he told me that the easy water was close ashore and the current outside, and therefore we must hug the bank, up-stream, to get the benefit of the former, and stay well out, down-stream, to take advantage of the latter. In my own mind I resolved to be a down-stream pilot and leave the up-streaming to people dead to prudence.

Now and then Mr. Bixby called my attention to certain things. Said he, "This is Six-Mile Point." I assented. It was pleasant enough information, but I could not see the bearing of it. I was not conscious that it was a matter of any interest to me. Another time he said, "This is Nine-Mile Point." Later he said, "This is Twelve-Mile Point." They were all about level with the water's edge; they all looked about alike to me; they were monotonously unpicturesque. I hoped Mr. Bixby would change the subject. But no; he would crowd up around a point, hugging the shore with affection, and then say: "The slack water ends here, abreast this bunch of China trees; now we cross over." So he crossed over. He gave me the wheel once or twice, but I had no luck. I either came near chipping off the edge of a sugar-plantation, or I yawed too far from shore, and so dropped back into disgrace again and got abused.

The watch was ended at last, and we took supper and went to bed. At midnight the glare of a lantern shone in my eyes, and the night watchman said:

"Come, turn out!"

And then he left. I could not understand this extraordinary procedure; so I presently gave up trying to, and dozed off to sleep. Pretty soon the watchman was back again, and this time he was gruff. I was annoyed. I said:

"What do you want to come bothering around here in the middle

of the night for? Now, as like as not, I'll not get to sleep again to-night."

The watchman said:

"Well, if this ain't good, I'm blessed."

The "off-watch" was just turning in, and I heard some brutal laughter from them, and such remarks as "Hello, watchman! ain't the new cub turned out yet? He's delicate, likely. Give him some sugar in a rag, and send for the chambermaid to sing 'Rock-a-by Baby,' to him."

About this time Mr. Bixby appeared on the scene. Something like a minute later I was climbing the pilot-house steps with some of my clothes on and the rest in my arms. Mr. Bixby was close behind, commenting. Here was something fresh—this thing of getting up in the middle of the night to go to work. It was a detail in piloting that had never occurred to me at all. I knew that boats ran all night, but somehow I had never happened to reflect that somebody had to get up out of a warm bed to run them. I began to fear that piloting was not quite so romantic as I had imagined it was; there was something very real and worklike about this new phase of it.

It was a rather dingy night, although a fair number of stars were out. The big mate was at the wheel, and he had the old tub pointed at a star and was holding her straight up the middle of the river. The shores on either hand were not much more than half a mile apart, but they seemed wonderfully far away and ever so vague and indistinct. The mate said:

"We've got to land at Jones's plantation, sir."

The vengeful spirit in me exulted. I said to myself, "I wish you joy of your job, Mr. Bixby; you'll have a good time finding Mr. Jones's plantation such a night as this; and I hope you never *will* find it as long as you live."

Mr. Bixby said to the mate:

"Upper end of the plantation, or the lower?"

"Upper."

"I can't do it. The stumps there are out of water at this stage. It's no great distance to the lower, and you'll have to get along with that."

"All right, sir. If Jones don't like it, he'll have to lump it, I reckon."

And then the mate left. My exultation began to cool and my wonder to come up. Here was a man who not only proposed to find this plantation on such a night, but to find either end of it you preferred. I dreadfully wanted to ask a question, but I was carrying about as many short answers as my cargo-room would admit of, so I held my peace. All I desired to ask Mr. Bixby was the simple

question whether he was ass enough to really imagine he was going to find that plantation on a night when all plantations were exactly alike and all of the same color. But I held in. I used to have fine inspirations of prudence in those days.

Mr. Bixby made for the shore and soon was scraping it, just the same as if it had been daylight. And not only that, but singing:

“Father in heaven, the day is declining,” etc.

It seemed to me that I had put my life in the keeping of a peculiarly reckless outcast. Presently he turned on me and said:

“What’s the name of the first point above New Orleans?”

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn’t know.

“Don’t *know*?”

This manner jolted me. I was down at the foot again, in a moment. But I had to say just what I had said before.

“Well, you’re a smart one!” said Mr. Bixby. “What’s the name of the *next* point?”

Once more I didn’t know.

“Well, this beats anything. Tell me the name of *any* point or place I told you.”

I studied awhile and decided that I couldn’t.

“Look here! What do you start out from, above Twelve-Mile Point, to cross over?”

“I—I—don’t know.”

“You—you—don’t know?” mimicking my drawling manner of speech. “What *do* you know?”

“I—I—nothing, for certain.”

“By the great Cæsar’s ghost, I believe you! You’re the stupidest dunderhead I ever saw or ever heard of, so help me Moses! The idea of *you* being a pilot—you! Why, you don’t know enough to pilot a cow down a lane.”

Oh, but his wrath was up! He was a nervous man, and he shuffled from one side of his wheel to the other as if the floor was hot. He would boil awhile to himself, and then overflow and scald me again.

“Look here! What do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?”

I tremblingly considered a moment, and then the devil of temptation provoked me to say:

“Well to—to—be entertaining, I thought.”

This was a red rag to the bull. He raged and stormed so (he was crossing the river at the time) that I judged it made him blind, because he ran over the steering-oar of a trading-scow. Of course the traders sent up a volley of red-hot profanity. Never was a man so grateful as Mr. Bixby was; because he was brimful, and here were

subjects who could *talk back*. He threw open a window, thrust his head out, and such an irruption followed as I never had heard before. The fainter and farther away the scowmen's curses drifted, the higher Mr. Bixby lifted his voice and the weightier his adjectives grew. When he closed the window he was empty. You could have drawn a seine through his system and not caught curses enough to disturb your mother with. Presently he said to me in the gentlest way:

"My boy, you must get a little memorandum-book; and every time I tell you a thing, put it down right away. There's only one way to be a pilot, and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C."

That was a dismal revelation to me; for my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges. However, I did not feel discouraged long. I judged that it was best to make some allowances, for doubtless Mr. Bixby was "stretching." Presently he pulled a rope and struck a few strokes on the big bell. The stars were all gone now, and the night was as black as ink. I could hear the wheels churn along the bank, but I was not entirely certain that I could see the shore. The voice of the invisible watchman called up from the hurricane-deck:

"What's this, sir?"

"Jones's plantation."

I said to myself, "I wish I might venture to offer a small bet that it isn't." But I did not chirp. I only waited to see. Mr. Bixby handled the engine-bells, and in due time the boat's nose came to the land, a torch glowed from the forecastle, a man skipped ashore, a darky's voice on the bank said: "Gimme de k'yarpet-bag, Mass' Jones," and the next moment we were standing up the river again, all serene. I reflected deeply awhile, and then said—but not aloud—"Well, the finding of that plantation was the luckiest accident that ever happened; but it couldn't happen again in a hundred years." And I fully believed it *was* an accident, too.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \* The thing that was running in my mind was, "Now, if my ears hear aright, I have not only to get the names of all the towns and islands and bends, and so on, by heart, but I must even get up a warm personal acquaintanceship with every old snag and one-limbed cottonwood and obscure wood-pile that ornaments the banks of this river for twelve hundred miles; and more than that, I must actually know where these things are in the dark, unless these guests

5. Several pages of expository matter have been omitted at this point. The young pilot has gained some confidence in the seven hundred miles of upstream navigation. At St. Louis, Mr. Bixby abandons the *Paul Jones* for "a big New Orleans boat \* \* \* a grand

affair," and takes his apprentice pilot with him. Now they are headed downstream, at a low and dangerous stage of the river, with several unemployed pilots who have come along just to watch the hazardous game.



are gifted with eyes that can pierce through two miles of solid blackness. I wish the piloting business was in Jericho and I had never thought of it."

At dusk Mr. Bixby tapped the big bell three times (the signal to land), and the captain emerged from his drawing-room in the forward end of the "texas," and looked up inquiringly. Mr. Bixby said:

"We will lay up here all night, captain."

"Very well, sir."

That was all. The boat came to shore and was tied up for the night. It seemed to me a fine thing that the pilot could do as he pleased, without asking so grand a captain's permission. I took my supper and went immediately to bed, discouraged by my day's observations and experiences. My late voyage's note-booking was but a confusion of meaningless names. It had tangled me all up in a knot every time I had looked at in it the daytime. I now hoped for respite in sleep; but no, it reveled all through my head till sunrise again, a frantic and tireless nightmare.

Next morning I felt pretty rusty and low-spirited. We went booming along, taking a good many chances, for we were anxious to "get out of the river" (as getting out to Cairo was called) before night should overtake us. But Mr. Bixby's partner, the other pilot, presently grounded the boat, and we lost so much time getting her off that it was plain the darkness would overtake us a good long way above the mouth. This was a great misfortune, especially to certain of our visiting pilots, whose boats would have to wait for their return, no matter how long that might be. It sobered the pilot-house talk a good deal. Coming up-stream, pilots did not mind low water or any kind of darkness; nothing stopped them but fog. But downstream work was different; a boat was too nearly helpless, with a stiff current pushing behind her; so it was not customary to run downstream at night in low water.

There seemed to be one small hope, however: if we could get through the intricate and dangerous Hat Island crossing before night, we could venture the rest, for we would have plainer sailing and better water. But it would be insanity to attempt Hat Island at night. So there was a deal of looking at watches all the rest of the day, and a constant ciphering upon the speed we were making; Hat Island was the eternal subject; sometimes hope was high and sometimes we were delayed in a bad crossing, and down it went again. For hours all hands lay under the burden of this suppressed excitement; it was even communicated to me, and I got to feeling so solicitous about Hat Island, and under such an awful pressure of responsibility, that I wished I might have five minutes on shore to draw a good, full, relieving breath, and start over again. We were standing no regular watches. Each of our pilots ran such portions of

the river as he had run when coming up-stream, because of his greater familiarity with it; but both remained in the pilot-house constantly.

An hour before sunset Mr. Bixby took the wheel, and Mr. W. stepped aside. For the next thirty minutes every man held his watch in his hand and was restless, silent, and uneasy. At last somebody said, with a doomful sigh:

"Well, yonder's Hat Island—and we can't make it."

All the watches closed with a snap, everybody sighed and muttered something about its being "too bad, too bad—ah, if we could *only* have got here half an hour sooner!" and the place was thick with the atmosphere of disappointment. Some started to go out, but loitered, hearing no bell-tap to land. The sun dipped behind the horizon, the boat went on. Inquiring looks passed from one guest to another; and one who had his hand on the door-knob and had turned it, waited, then presently took away his hand and let the knob turn back again. We bore steadily down the bend. More looks were exchanged, and nods of surprised admiration—but no words. Insensibly the men drew together behind Mr. Bixby, as the sky darkened and one or two dim stars came out. The dead silence and sense of waiting became oppressive. Mr. Bixby pulled the cord, and two deep, mellow tones from the big bell floated off on the night. Then a pause, and one more note was struck. The watchman's voice followed, from the hurricane-deck:

"Labboard lead, there! Stabboard lead!"

The cries of the leadsmen began to rise out of the distance, and were gruffly repeated by the word-passers on the hurricane-deck.

"M-a-r-k three! M-a-r-k three! Quarter-less-three! Half twain! Quarter twain! M-a-r-k twain! Quarter-less—"

Mr. Bixby pulled two bell-ropes, and was answered by faint jinglings far below in the engine-room, and our speed slackened. The steam began to whistle through the gauge-cocks. The cries of the leadsmen went on—and it is a weird sound, always, in the night. Every pilot in the lot was watching now, with fixed eyes, and talking under his breath. Nobody was calm and easy but Mr. Bixby. He would put his wheel down and stand on a spoke, and as the steamer swung into her (to me) utterly invisible marks—for we seemed to be in the midst of a wide and gloomy sea—he would meet and fasten her there. Out of the murmur of half-audible talk, one caught a coherent sentence now and then—such as:

"There; she's over the first reef all right!"

After a pause, another subdued voice:

"Her stern's coming down just *exactly* right, by *George*!"

"Now she's in the marks; over she goes!"

Somebody else muttered:

"Oh, it was done beautiful—*beautiful!*"

Now the engines were stopped altogether, and we drifted with the current. Not that I could see the boat drift, for I could not, the stars being all gone by this time. This drifting was the dismalest work; it held one's heart still. Presently I discovered a blacker gloom than that which surrounded us. It was the head of the island. We were closing right down upon it. We entered its deeper shadow, and so imminent seemed the peril that I was likely to suffocate; and I had the strongest impulse to do *something*, anything, to save the vessel. But still Mr. Bixby stood by his wheel, silent, intent as a cat, and all the pilots stood shoulder to shoulder at his back.

"She'll not make it!" somebody whispered.

The water grew shoaler and shoaler, by the leadsman's cries, till it was down to:

"Eight-and-a-half! E-i-g-h-t feet! E-i-g-h-t feet! Seven-and—"

Mr. Bixby said warningly through his speaking-tube to the engineer:

"Stand by, now!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Seven-and-a-half! Seven feet! Six-and—"

We touched bottom! Instantly Mr. Bixby set a lot of bells ringing, shouted through the tube, "Now, let her have it—every ounce you've got!" then to his partner, "Put her hard down! snatch her! snatch her!" The boat rasped and ground her way through the sand, hung upon the apex of disaster a single tremendous instant, and then over she went! And such a shout as went up at Mr. Bixby's back never loosened the roof of a pilot-house before!

There was no more trouble after that. Mr. Bixby was a hero that night; and it was some little time, too, before his exploit ceased to be talked about by river-men.

Fully to realize the marvelous precision required in laying the great steamer in her marks in that murky waste of water, one should know that not only must she pick her intricate way through snags and blind reefs, and then shave the head of the island so closely as to brush the overhanging foliage with her stern, but at one place she must pass almost within arm's reach of a sunken and invisible wreck that would snatch the hull timbers from under her if she should strike it, and destroy a quarter of a million dollars' worth of steamboat and cargo in five minutes, and maybe a hundred and fifty human lives into the bargain.

The last remark I heard that night was a compliment to Mr. Bixby, uttered in soliloquy and with unction by one of our guests. He said:

"By the Shadow of Death, but he's a lightning pilot!"

The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg<sup>9</sup>

## I

It was many years ago. Hadleyburg was the most honest and upright town in all the region round about. It had kept that reputation unsmirched during three generations, and was prouder of it than of any other of its possessions. It was so proud of it, and so anxious to insure its perpetuation, that it began to teach the principles of honest dealing to its babies in the cradle, and made the like teachings the staple of their culture thenceforward through all the years devoted to their education. Also, throughout the formative years temptations were kept out of the way of the young people, so that their honesty could have every chance to harden and solidify, and become a part of their very bone. The neighboring towns were jealous of this honorable supremacy, and affected to sneer at Hadleyburg's pride in it and call it vanity; but all the same they were obliged to acknowledge that Hadleyburg was in reality an incorruptible town; and if pressed they would also acknowledge that the mere fact that a young man hailed from Hadleyburg was all the recommendation he needed when he went forth from his natal town to seek for responsible employment.

But at last, in the drift of time, Hadleyburg had the ill luck to offend a passing stranger—possibly without knowing it, certainly without caring, for Hadleyburg was sufficient unto itself, and cared not a rap for strangers or their opinions. Still, it would have been well to make an exception in this one's case, for he was a bitter man and revengeful. All through his wanderings during a whole year he kept his injury in mind, and gave all his leisure moments to trying to invent a compensating satisfaction for it. He contrived many plans, and all of them were good, but none of them was quite sweeping enough; the poorest of them would hurt a great many individuals, but what he wanted was a plan which would comprehend the entire town, and not let so much as one person escape unhurt. At last he had a fortunate idea, and when it fell into his brain it lit up his whole head with an evil joy. He began to form a plan at once, saying to himself, "That is the thing to do—I will corrupt the town."

Six months later he went to Hadleyburg, and arrived in a buggy at the house of the old cashier of the bank about ten at night. He got a sack out of the buggy, shouldered it, and staggered with it through the cottage yard, and knocked at the door. A woman's voice said "Come in," and he entered, and set his sack behind the stove in the parlor, saying politely to the old lady who sat reading the

9. This story was first published in *Harper's Magazine* for December, 1899, and then collected in *The Man That Cor-*

*rupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories and Essays* (1900), which the present text follows.

*Missionary Herald* by the lamp:

"Pray keep your seat, madam, I will not disturb you. There—now it is pretty well concealed; one would hardly know it was there. Can I see your husband a moment, madam?"

No, he was gone to Brixton, and might not return before morning.

"Very well, madam, it is no matter. I merely wanted to leave that sack in his care, to be delivered to the rightful owner when he shall be found. I am a stranger; he does not know me; I am merely passing through the town tonight to discharge a matter which has been long in my mind. My errand is now completed, and I go pleased and a little proud, and you will never see me again. There is a paper attached to the sack which will explain everything. Good-night, madam."

The old lady was afraid of the mysterious big stranger, and was glad to see him go. But her curiosity was roused, and she went straight to the sack and brought away the paper. It began as follows:

*"TO BE PUBLISHED; or, the right man sought out by private inquiry—either will answer. This sack contains gold coin weighing a hundred and sixty pounds four ounces—"*

"Mercy on us, and the door not locked!"

Mrs. Richards flew to it all in a tremble and locked it, then pulled down the window-shades and stood frightened, worried, and wondering if there was anything else she could do toward making herself and the money more safe. She listened awhile for burglars, then surrendered to curiosity and went back to the lamp and finished reading the paper:

*"I am a foreigner, and am presently going back to my own country, to remain there permanently. I am grateful to America for what I have received at her hands during my stay under her flag; and to one of her citizens—a citizen of Hadleyburg—I am especially grateful for a great kindness done me a year or two ago. Two great kindnesses; in fact. I will explain. I was a gambler. I say I WAS. I was a ruined gambler. I arrived in this village at night, hungry and without a penny. I asked for help—in the dark; I was ashamed to beg in the light. I begged of the right man. He gave me twenty dollars—that is to say, he gave me life, as I considered it. He also gave me fortune; for out of that money I have made myself rich at the gaming-table. And finally, a remark which he made to me has remained with me to this day, and has at last conquered me; and in conquering has saved the remnant of my morals; I shall gamble no more. Now I have no idea who that man was, but I want him found, and I want him to have this money, to give away, throw away or keep, as he pleases. It is merely my way of testifying my*

gratitude to him. If I could stay, I would find him myself; but no matter, he will be found. This is an honest town, an incorruptible town, and I know I can trust it without fear. This man can be identified by the remark which he made to me; I feel persuaded that he will remember it.

"And now my plan is this: If you prefer to conduct the inquiry privately, do so. Tell the contents of this present writing to any one who is likely to be the right man. If he shall answer, 'I am the man; the remark I made was so-and-so,' apply the test—to wit: open the sack, and in it you will find a sealed envelope containing that remark. If the remark mentioned by the candidate tallies with it, give him the money, and ask no further questions, for he is certainly the right man.

"But if you shall prefer a public inquiry, then publish this present writing in the local paper—with these instructions added, to wit: Thirty days from now, let the candidate appear at the town-hall at eight in the evening (Friday), and hand his remark, in a sealed envelope, to the Rev. Mr. Burgess (if he will be kind enough to act); and let Mr. Burgess there and then destroy the seals on the sack, open it, and see if the remark is correct; if correct, let the money be delivered, with my sincere gratitude, to my benefactor thus identified."

Mrs. Richards sat down, gently, quivering with excitement, and was soon lost in thinking—after this pattern: "What a strange thing it is! . . . And what a fortune for that kind man who set his bread afloat upon the waters! . . . If he had only been my husband that did it!—for we are so poor, so old and poor! . . ." Then, with a sigh—"But it was not my Edward; no, it was not he that gave the stranger twenty dollars. It is a pity too; I see it now. . . ." Then, with a shudder—"But it is *gambler's* money! the wages of sin: we couldn't take it; we couldn't touch it. I don't like to be near it; it seems a defilement." She moved to a farther chair. . . . "I wish Edward would come, and take it to the bank; a burglar might come at any moment; it is dreadful to be here all alone with it."

At eleven Mr. Richards arrived, and while his wife was saying, "I am so glad you've come!" he was saying, "I'm so tired—tired clear out; it is dreadful to be poor, and have to make these dismal journeys at my time of life. Always at the grind, grind, grind, on a salary—another man's slave, and he sitting at home in his slippers, rich and comfortable."

"I am so sorry for you, Edward, you know that; but be comforted; we have our livelihood; we have our good name—"

"Yes, Mary, and that is everything. Don't mind my talk—it's just a moment's irritation and doesn't mean anything. Kiss me—there, it's all gone now, and I am not complaining any more. What have

you been getting? What's in the sack?"

Then his wife told him the great secret. It dazed him for a moment; then he said:

"It weighs a hundred and sixty pounds? Why, Mary, it's forty thousand dollars—think of it—a whole fortune! Not ten men in this village are worth that much. Give me the paper."

He skimmed through it and said:

"Isn't it an adventure! Why, it's a romance; it's like the impossible things one reads about in books, and never sees in life." He was well stirred up now; cheerful, even gleeful. He tapped his old wife on the cheek, and said, humorously, "Why, we're rich, Mary, rich; all we've got to do is to bury the money and burn the papers. If the gambler ever comes to inquire, we'll merely look coldly upon him and say: 'What is this nonsense you are talking? We have never heard of you and your sack of gold before;' and then he would look foolish, and—"

"And in the mean time, while you are running on with your jokes, the money is still here, and it is fast getting along toward burglartime."

"True. Very well, what shall we do—make the inquiry private? No, not that: it would spoil the romance. The public method is better. Think what a noise it will make! And it will make all the other towns jealous; for no stranger would trust such a thing to any town but Hadleyburg, and they know it. It's a great card for us. I must get to the printing-office now, or I shall be too late."

"But stop—stop—don't leave me here alone with it, Edward!"

But he was gone. For only a little while, however. Not far from his own house he met the editor-proprietor of the paper, and gave him the document, and said, "Here is a good thing for you, Cox—put it in."

"It may be too late, Mr. Richards, but I'll see."

At home again he and his wife sat down to talk the charming mystery over; they were in no condition for sleep. The first question was, Who could the citizen have been who gave the stranger the twenty dollars? It seemed a simple one; both answered it in the same breath—

"Barclay Goodson."

"Yes," said Richards, "he could have done it, and it would have been like him, but there's not another in the town."

"Everybody will grant that, Edward—grant it privately, anyway. For six months, now, the village has been its own proper self once more—honest, narrow, self-righteous, and stingy."

"It is what he always called it, to the day of his death—said it right out publicly, too."

"Yes, and he was hated for it."

"Oh, of course; but he didn't care. I reckon he was the best-hated

man among us, except the Reverend Burgess."

"Well, Burgess deserves it—he will never get another congregation here. Mean as the town is, it knows how to estimate *him*. Edward, doesn't it seem odd that the stranger should appoint Burgess to deliver the money?"

"Well, yes—it does. That is—that is—"

"Why so much *that-is-ing*? Would *you* select him?"

"Mary, maybe the stranger knows him better than this village does."

"Much *that* would help Burgess!"

The husband seemed perplexed for an answer; the wife kept a steady eye upon him, and waited. Finally Richards said, with the hesitancy of one who is making a statement which is likely to encounter doubt:

"Mary, Burgess is not a bad man."

His wife was certainly surprised.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed.

"He is not a bad man. I know. The whole of his unpopularity had its foundation in that one thing—the thing that made so much noise."

"That 'one thing,' indeed! As if that 'one thing' wasn't enough, all by itself."

"Plenty. Plenty. Only he wasn't guilty of it."

"How you talk! Not guilty of it! Everybody knows he *was* guilty."

"Mary, I give you my word—he was innocent."

"I can't believe it, and I don't. How do you know?"

"It is a confession. I am ashamed, but I will make it. I was the only man who knew he was innocent. I could have saved him, and—and—well, you know how the town was wrought up—I hadn't the pluck to do it. It would have turned everybody against me. I felt mean, ever so mean; but I didn't dare; I hadn't the manliness to face that."

Mary looked troubled, and for a while was silent. Then she said, stammeringly:

"I—I don't think it would have done for you to—to—One mustn't—er—public opinion—one has to be so careful—so—" It was a difficult road, and she got mired; but after a little she got started again. "It was a great pity, but—Why, we couldn't afford it, Edward—we couldn't indeed. Oh, I wouldn't have had you do it for anything!"

"It would have lost us the good-will of so many people, Mary; and then—and then—"

"What troubles me now is, what *he* thinks of us, Edward."

"He? *He* doesn't suspect that I could have saved him."

"Oh," exclaimed the wife, in a tone of relief, "I am glad of that. As long as he doesn't know that you could have saved him, he—he



—well, that makes it a great deal better. Why, I might have known he didn't know, because he is always trying to be friendly with us, as little encouragement as we give him. More than once people have twitted me with it. There's the Wilsons, and the Wilcoxes, and the Harknesses, they take a mean pleasure in saying, '*Your friend Burgess*,' because they know it pesters me. I wish he wouldn't persist in liking us so; I can't think why he keeps it up."

"I can explain it. It's another confession. When the thing was new and hot, and the town made a plan to ride him on a rail, my conscience hurt me so that I couldn't stand it, and I went privately and gave him notice, and he got out of the town and staid out till it was safe to come back."

"Edward! If the town had found it out—"

"*Don't!* It scares me yet, to think of it. I repented of it the minute it was done; and I was even afraid to tell you, lest your face might betray it to somebody. I didn't sleep any that night, for worrying. But after a few days I saw that no was was going to suspect me, and after that I got to feeling glad I did it. And I feel glad yet, Mary—glad through and through."

"So do I, now, for it would have been a dreadful way to treat him. Yes, I'm glad; for really you did owe him that, you know. But, Edward, suppose it should come out yet, some day!"

"It won't."

"Why?"

"Because everybody thinks it was Goodson."

"Of course they would!"

"Certainly. And of course *he* didn't care. They persuaded poor old Sawsberry to go and charge it on him, and he went blustering over there and did it. Goodson looked him over, like as if he was hunting for a place on him that he could despise the most, then he says, 'So you are the Committee of Inquiry, are you?' Sawsberry said that was about what he was. 'Hm. Do they require particulars, or do you reckon a kind of a *general* answer will do?' 'If they require particulars, I will come back, Mr. Goodson; I will take the *general* answer first.' 'Very well, then, tell them to go to hell—I reckon that's *general* enough. And I'll give you some advice, Sawsberry; when you come back for the particulars, fetch a basket to carry the relics of yourself home in.' "

"Just like Goodson; it's got all the marks. He had only vanity; he thought he could give advice better than any other person."

"It settled the business, and saved us, Mary. The subject was dropped."

"Bless you, I'm not doubting *that*."

Then they took up the gold-sack mystery again, with strong interest. Soon the conversation began to suffer breaks—interruptions caused by absorbed thinkings. The breaks grew more and more

frequent. At last Richards lost himself wholly in thought. He sat long, gazing vacantly at the floor, and by-and-by he began to punctuate his thoughts with little nervous movements of his hands that seemed to indicate vexation. Meantime his wife too had relapsed into a thoughtful silence, and her movements were beginning to show a troubled discomfort. Finally Richards got up and strode aimlessly about the room, ploughing his hands through his hair, much as a somnambulist might do who was having a bad dream. Then he seemed to arrive at a definite purpose; and without a word he put on his hat and passed quickly out of the house. His wife sat brooding, with a drawn face, and did not seem to be aware that she was alone. Now and then she murmured, "Lead us not into t . . . but—but—we are so poor, so poor! . . . Lead us not into . . . Ah, who would be hurt by it?—and no one would ever know. . . . Lead us . . ." The voice died out in mumblings. After a little she glanced up and muttered in a half frightened, half-glad way—

"He is gone! But, oh dear, he may be too late—too late. . . . Maybe not—maybe there is still time." She rose and stood thinking, nervously clasping and unclasping her hands. A slight shudder shook her frame, and she said, out of a dry throat, "God forgive me—it's awful to think such things—but . . . Lord, how we are made—how strangely we are made!"

She turned the light low, and slipped stealthily over and knelt down by the sack and felt of its ridgy sides with her hands, and fondled them lovingly; and there was a gloating light in her poor old eyes. She fell into fits of absence; and came half out of them at times to mutter, "If we had only waited!—oh, if we had only waited a little, and not been in such a hurry!"

Meantime Cox had gone home from his office and told his wife all about the strange thing that had happened, and they had talked it over eagerly, and guessed that the late Goodson was the only man in the town who could have helped a suffering stranger with so noble a sum as twenty dollars. Then there was a pause, and the two became thoughtful and silent. And by-and-by nervous and fidgety. At last the wife said, as if to herself:

"Nobody knows this secret but the Richardses . . . and us . . . nobody."

The husband came out of his thinkings with a slight start, and gazed wistfully at his wife, whose face was become very pale; then he hesitatingly rose, and glanced furtively at his hat, then at his wife—a sort of mute inquiry. Mrs. Cox swallowed once or twice, with her hand at her throat, then in place of speech she nodded her head. In a moment she was alone, and mumbling to herself.

And now Richards and Cox were hurrying through the deserted streets, from opposite directions. They met, panting, at the foot of

the printing-office stairs; by the night-light there they read each other's face. Cox whispered:

"Nobody knows about this but us?"

The whispered answer was,

"Not a soul—on honor, not a soul!"

"If it isn't too late to—"

The men were starting up-stairs; at this moment they were overtaken by a boy, and Cox asked:

"Is that you, Johnny?"

"Yes, sir."

"You needn't ship the early mail—nor *any* mail; wait till I tell you."

"It's already gone, sir."

"Gone?" It had the sound of an unspeakable disappointment in it.

"Yes, sir. Time-table for Brixton and all the towns beyond changed to-day, sir—had to get the papers in twenty minutes earlier than common. I had to rush; if I had been two minutes later—"

The men turned and walked slowly away, not waiting to hear the rest. Neither of them spoke during ten minutes; then Cox said, in a vexed tone:

"What possessed you to be in such a hurry, I can't make out."

The answer was humble enough:

"I see it now, but somehow I never thought, you know, until it was too late. But the next time—"

"Next time be hanged! It won't come in a thousand years."

Then the friends separated without a good-night, and dragged themselves home with the gait of mortally stricken men. At their homes their wives sprang up with an eager "Well?"—then saw the answer with their eyes and sank down sorrowing, without waiting for it to come in words. In both houses a discussion followed of a heated sort—a new thing; there had been discussions before, but not heated ones, not ungentle ones. The discussions to-night were a sort of seeming plagiarisms of each other. Mrs. Richards said,

"If you had only waited, Edward—if you had only stopped to think; but no, you must run straight to the printing-office and spread it all over the world."

"It *said* publish it."

"That is nothing; it also said do it privately, if you liked. There, now—is that true, or not?"

"Why, yes—yes, it is true; but when I thought what a stir it would make, and what a compliment it was to Hadleyburg that a stranger should trust it so—"

"Oh, certainly, I know all that; but if you had only stopped to think, you would have seen that you *couldn't* find the right man, be-

cause he is in his grave, and hasn't left chick nor child nor relation behind him; and as long as the money went to somebody that awfully needed it, and nobody would be hurt by it, and—and—"

She broke down, crying. Her husband tried to think of some comforting thing to say, and presently came out with this:

"But after all, Mary, it must be for the best—it *must* be; we know that. And we must remember that it was so ordered—"

"Ordered! Oh, everything's *ordered*, when a person has to find some way out when he has been stupid. Just the same, it was *ordered* that the money should come to us in this special way, and it was you that must take it on yourself to go meddling with the designs of Providence—and who gave you the right? It was wicked, that is what it was—just blasphemous presumption, and no more becoming to a meek and humble professor of—"

"But, Mary, you know how we have been trained all our lives long, like the whole village, till it is absolutely second nature to us to stop not a single moment to think when there's an honest thing to be done—"

"Oh, I know it, I know it—it's been one everlasting training and training and training in honesty—honesty shielded, from the very cradle, against every possible temptation, and so it's *artificial* honesty, and weak as water when temptation comes, as we have seen this night. God knows I never had shade nor shadow of a doubt of my petrified and indestructible honesty until now—and now, under the very first big and real temptation, I—Edward, it is my belief that this town's honesty is as rotten as mine is; as rotten as yours is. It is a mean town, a hard, stingy town, and hasn't a virtue in the world but this honesty it is so celebrated for and so conceited about; and so help me, I do believe that if ever the day comes that its honesty falls under great temptation, its grand reputation will go to ruin like a house of cards. There, now, I've made confession, and I feel better; I am a humbug, and I've been one all my life, without knowing it. Let no man call me honest again—I will not have it."

"I—Well, Mary, I feel a good deal as you do; I certainly do. It seems strange, too, so strange. I never could have believed it—never."

A long silence followed; both were sunk in thought. At last the wife looked up and said:

"I know what you are thinking, Edward."

Richards had the embarrassed look of a person who is caught.

"I am ashamed to confess it, Mary, but—"

"It's no matter, Edward, I was thinking the same question myself."

"I hope so. State it."

"You were thinking, if a body could only guess out *what the remark* was that Goodson made to the stranger."

"It's perfectly true. I feel guilty and ashamed. And you?"

"I'm past it. Let us make a pallet here; we've got to stand watch till the bank vault opens in the morning and admits the sack. . . . Oh, dear, oh, dear—if we hadn't made the mistake!"

The pallet was made, and Mary said:

"The open sesame—what could it have been? I do wonder what that remark could have been? But come; we will get to bed now."

"And sleep?"

"No; think."

"Yes, think."

By this time the Coxes too had completed their spat and their reconciliation, and were turning in—to think, to think, and toss, and fret, and worry over what the remark could possibly have been which Goodson made to the stranded derelict: that golden remark; that remark worth forty thousand dollars, cash.

The reason that the village telegraph-office was open later than usual that night was this: The foreman of Cox's paper was the local representative of the Associated Press. One might say its honorary representative, for it wasn't four times a year that he could furnish thirty words that would be accepted. But this time it was different. His despatch stating what he had caught got an instant answer:

*"Send the whole thing—all the details—twelve hundred words."*

A colossal order! The foreman filled the bill; and he was the proudest man in the State. By breakfast-time the next morning the name of Hadleyburg the Incorruptible was on every lip in America, from Montreal to the Gulf, from the glaciers of Alaska to the orange-groves of Florida; and millions and millions of people were discussing the stranger and his money-sack, and wondering if the right man would be found, and hoping some more news about the matter would come soon—right away.

## II

Hadleyburg village woke up world-celebrated—astonished—happy—vain. Vain beyond imagination. Its nineteen principal citizens and their wives went about shaking hands with each other, and beaming, and smiling, and congratulating, and saying *this* thing adds a new word to the dictionary—*Hadleyburg*, synonym for *incorruptible*—destined to live in dictionaries forever! And the minor and unimportant citizens and their wives went around acting in much the same way. Everybody ran to the bank to see the gold-sack; and before noon grieved and envious crowds began to flock in from Brixton and all the neighboring towns; and that afternoon and next day reporters began to arrive from everywhere to verify the sack and its history and write the whole thing up anew, and make dashing free-hand pictures of the sack and of Richards's house, and the bank, and the Presbyterian church, and the Baptist church, and the public square, and the town-hall where the test would be applied and the

money delivered; and damnable portraits of the Richardses, and Pinkerton the banker, and Cox, and the foreman, and Reverend Burgess, and the postmaster—and even of Jack Halliday, who was the loafing, good-natured, no-account, irreverent fisherman, hunter, boys' friend, stray-dog's friend, typical "Sam Lawson"<sup>1</sup> of the town. The little mean, smirking, oily Pinkerton showed the sack to all comers, and rubbed his sleek palms together pleasantly, and enlarged upon the town's fine old reputation for honesty and upon this wonderful endorsement of it, and hoped and believed that the example would now spread far and wide over the American world, and be epoch-making in the matter of moral regeneration. And so on, and so on.

By the end of a week things had quieted down again; the wild intoxication of pride and joy had sobered to a soft, sweet, silent delight—a sort of deep, nameless, unutterable content. All faces bore a look of peaceful, holy happiness.

Then a change came. It was a gradual change: so gradual that its beginnings were hardly noticed; maybe were not noticed at all, except by Jack Halliday, who always noticed everything; and always made fun of it, too, no matter what it was. He began to throw out chaffing remarks about people not looking quite so happy as they did a day or two ago; and next he claimed that the new aspect was deepening to positive sadness; next, that it was taking on a sick look; and finally he said that everybody was become so moody, thoughtful, and absent-minded that he could rob the meanest man in town of a cent out of the bottom of his breeches pocket and not disturb his reverie.

At this stage—or at about this stage—a saying like this was dropped at bedtime—with a sigh, usually—by the head of each of the nineteen principal households: "Ah, what *could* have been the remark that Goodson made!"

And straightway—with a shudder—came this, from the man's wife:

"Oh, *don't!* What horrible thing are you mulling in your mind? Put it away from you, for God's sake!"

But that question was wrung from those men again the next night—and got the same retort. But weaker.

And the third night the men uttered the question yet again—with anguish, and absently. This time—and the following night—the wives fidgeted feebly, and tried to say something. But didn't.

And the night after that they found their tongues and responded—longingly,

"Oh, if we *could* only guess!"

Halliday's comments grew daily more and more sparkingly dis-

1. A lazy, humorous Yankee character who appears in Harriet Beecher Stowe's

*Oldtown Folks* (1869) and *Sam Lawson's Oldtown Fireside Stories* (1872).

agrecable and disparaging. He went diligently about, laughing at the town, individually and in mass. But his laugh was the only one left in the village: it fell upon a hollow and mournful vacancy and emptiness. Not even a smile was findable anywhere. Halliday carried a cigar-box around on a tripod, playing that it was a camera, and halted all passers and aimed the thing and said, "Ready!—now look pleasant, please," but not even this capital joke could surprise the dreary faces into any softening.

So three weeks passed—one week was left. It was Saturday evening—after supper. Instead of the aforetime Saturday-evening flutter and bustle and shopping and larking, the streets were empty and desolate. Richards and his old wife sat apart in their little parlor—miserable and thinking. This was become their evening habit now: the life-long habit which had preceded it, of reading, knitting, and contented chat, or receiving or paying neighborly calls, was dead and gone and forgotten, ages ago—two or three weeks ago; nobody talked now, nobody read, nobody visited—the whole village sat at home, sighing, worrying, silent. Trying to guess out that remark.

The postman left a letter. Richards glanced listlessly at the superscription and the post-mark—unfamiliar, both—and tossed the letter on the table and resumed his might-have-beens and his hopeless dull miseries where he had left them off. Two or three hours later his wife got wearily up and was going away to bed without a good-night—custom now—but she stopped near the letter and eyed it awhile with a dead interest, then broke it open, and began to skim it over. Richards, sitting there with his chair tilted back against the wall and his chin between his knees, heard something fall. It was his wife. He sprang to her side, but she cried out:

"Leave me alone, I am too happy. Read the letter—read it!"

He did. He devoured it, his brain reeling. The letter was from a distant State, and it said:

*"I am a stranger to you, but no matter: I have something to tell. I have just arrived home from Mexico, and learned about that episode. Of course you do not know who made that remark, but I know, and I am the only person living who does know. It was GOODSON. I knew him well, many years ago. I passed through your village that very night, and was his guest till the midnight train came along. I overheard him make that remark to the stranger in the dark—it was in Hale Alley. He and I talked of it the rest of the way home, and while smoking in his house. He mentioned many of your villagers in the course of his talk—most of them in a very uncomplimentary way, but two or three favorably: among these latter yourself. I say 'favorably'—nothing stronger. I remember his saying he did not actually LIKE any person in the town—not one; but that you—I THINK he said you—am almost sure, had done him a very*

*great service once, possibly without knowing the full value of it, and he wished he had a fortune, he would leave it to you when he died, and a curse apiece for the rest of the citizens. Now, then, if it was you that did him that service, you are his legitimate heir, and entitled to the sack of gold. I know that I can trust to your honor and honesty, for in a citizen of Hadleyburg these virtues are an unfailing inheritance, and so I am going to reveal to you the remark, well satisfied that if you are not the right man you will seek and find the right one and see that poor Goodson's debt of gratitude for the service referred to is paid. This is the remark: 'YOU ARE FAR FROM BEING A BAD MAN: GO, AND REFORM.'*

"HOWARD L. STEPHENSON"

"Oh, Edward, the money is ours, and I am so grateful, *oh*, so grateful—kiss me, dear, it's forever since we kissed—and we needed it so—the money—and now you are free of Pinkerton and his bank, and nobody's slave any more; it seems to me I could fly for joy."

It was a happy half-hour that the couple spent there on the settee caressing each other; it was the old days come again—days that had begun with their courtship and lasted without a break till the stranger brought the deadly money. By-and-by the wife said:

"Oh, Edward, how lucky it was you did him that grand service, poor Goodson! I never liked him, but I love him now. And it was fine and beautiful of you never to mention it or brag about it." Then, with a touch of reproach, "But you ought to have told *me*, Edward, you ought to have told your wife, you know."

"Well, I—er—well, Mary, you see——"

"Now stop hemming and hawing, and tell me about it, Edward. I always loved you, and now I'm proud of you. Everybody believes there was only one good generous soul in this village, and now it turns out that you—Edward, why don't you tell me?"

"Well—er—er— Why, Mary, I can't!"

"You *can't*? Why can't you?"

"You see, he—well, he—he made me promise I wouldn't."

The wife looked him over, and said, very slowly,

"Made—you—promise? Edward, what do you tell me that for?"

"Mary, do you think I would lie?"

She was troubled and silent for a moment, then she laid her hand within his and said:

"No . . . no. We have wandered far enough from our bearings—God spare us that! In all your life you have never uttered a lie. But now—now that the foundations of things seem to be crumbling from under us, we—we—" She lost her voice for a moment, then said, brokenly, "Lead us not into temptation. . . . I think you made the promise, Edward. Let it rest so. Let us keep away from



that ground. Now—that is all gone by; let us be happy again; it is no time for clouds.”

Edward found it something of an effort to comply, for his mind kept wandering—trying to remember what the service was that he had done Goodson.

The couple lay awake the most of the night, Mary happy and busy. Edward busy, but not so happy. Mary was planning what she would do with the money. Edward was trying to recall that service. At first his conscience was sore on account of the lie he had told Mary—if it was a lie. After much reflection—suppose it *was* a lie? What then? Was it such a great matter? Aren't we always *acting* lies? Then why not *tell* them? Look at Mary—look what she had done. While he was hurrying off on his honest errand, what was she doing? Lamenting because the papers hadn't been destroyed and the money kept! Is theft better than lying?

*That* point lost its sting—the lie dropped into the background and left comfort behind it. The next point came to the front: *had* he rendered that service? Well, here was Goodson's own evidence as reported in Stephenson's letter; there could be no better evidence than that—it was even *proof* that he had rendered it. Of course. So that point was settled. . . . No, not quite. He recalled with a wince that this unknown Mr. Stephenson was just a trifle unsure as to whether the performer of it was Richards or some other—and, oh dear, he had to put Richards on his honor! He must himself decide whither that money must go—and Mr. Stephenson was not doubting that if he was the wrong man he would go honorably and find the right one. Oh, it was odious to put a man in such a situation—ah, why couldn't Stephenson have left out that doubt! What did he want to intrude that for?

Further reflection. How did it happen that *Richards's* name remained in Stephenson's mind as indicating the right man, and not some other man's name? That looked good. Yes, that looked very good. In fact, it went on looking better and better, straight along—until by-and-by it grew into positive *proof*. And then Richards put the matter at once out of his mind, for he had a private instinct that a proof once established is better left so.

He was feeling reasonably comfortable now, but there was still one other detail that kept pushing itself on his notice: of course he had done that service—that was settled; but what *was* that service? He must recall it—he would not go to sleep till he had recalled it; it would make his peace of mind perfect. And so he thought and thought. He thought of a dozen things—possible services, even probable services—but none of them seemed adequate, none of them seemed large enough, none of them seemed worth the money—worth the fortune Goodson had wished he could leave in his will.

And besides, he couldn't remember having done them, anyway. Now, then—now, then—what *kind* of a service would it be that would make a man so inordinately grateful? Ah—the saving of his soul! That must be it. Yes, he could remember, now, how he once set himself the task of converting Goodson, and labored at it as much as—he was going to say three months; but upon closer examination it shrunk to a month, then to a week, then to a day, then to nothing. Yes, he remembered now, and with unwelcome vividness, that Goodson had told him to go to thunder and mind his own business—he wasn't hankering to follow Hadleyburg to heaven!

So that solution was a failure—he hadn't saved Goodson's soul. Richards was discouraged. Then after a little came another idea: had he saved Goodson's property? No, that wouldn't do—he hadn't any. His life? This is it! Of course. Why, he might have thought of it before. This time he was on the right track, sure. His imagination was hard at work in a minute, now.

Thereafter during a stretch of two exhausting hours he was busy saving Goodson's life. He saved it in all kinds of difficult and perilous ways. In every case he got it saved satisfactorily up to a certain point; then, just as he was beginning to get well persuaded that it had really happened, a troublesome detail would turn up which made the whole thing impossible. As in the matter of drowning, for instance. In that case he had swum out and tugged Goodson ashore in an unconscious state with a great crowd looking on and applauding, but when he had got it all thought out and was just beginning to remember all about it a whole swarm of disqualifying details arrived on the ground: the town would have known of it, it would glare like a limelight in his own memory instead of being an inconspicuous service which he had possibly rendered "without knowing its full value." And at this point he remembered that he couldn't swim, anyway.

Ah—*there* was a point which he had been overlooking from the start: it had to be a service which he had rendered "possibly without knowing the full value of it." Why, really, that ought to be an easy hunt—much easier than those others. And sure enough, by-and-by he found it. Goodson, years and years ago, came near marrying a very sweet and pretty girl, named Nancy Hewitt, but in some way or other the match had been broken off; the girl died, Goodson remained a bachelor, and by-and-by became a soured one and a frank despiser of the human species. Soon after the girl's death the village found out, or thought it had found out, that she carried a spoonful of negro blood in her veins. Richards worked at these details a good while, and in the end he thought he remembered things concerning them which must have gotten mislaid in his memory through long neglect. He seemed to dimly remember that it was *he* that found

out about the negro blood; that it was he that told the village; that the village told Goodson where they got it; that he thus saved Goodson from marrying the tainted girl; that he had done him this great service "without knowing the full value of it," in fact without knowing that he *was* doing it; but that Goodson knew the value of it, and what a narrow escape he had had, and so went to his grave grateful to his benefactor and wishing he had a fortune to leave him. It was all clear and simple now, and the more he went over it the more luminous and certain it grew; and at last, when he nestled to sleep satisfied and happy, he remembered the whole thing just as if it had been yesterday. In fact, he dimly remembered Goodson's *telling* him his gratitude once. Meantime Mary had spent six thousand dollars on a new house for herself and a pair of slippers for her pastor, and then had fallen peacefully to rest.

That same Saturday evening the postman had delivered a letter to each of the other principal citizens—nineteen letters in all. No two of the envelopes were alike, and no two of the superscriptions were in the same hand, but the letters inside were just like each other in every detail but one. They were exact copies of the letter received by Richards—handwriting and all—and were all signed by Stephenson, but in place of Richards's name each receiver's own name appeared.

All night long eighteen principal citizens did what their caste-brother Richards was doing at the same time—they put in their energies trying to remember what notable service it was that they had unconsciously done Barclay Goodson. In no case was it a holiday job; still they succeeded.

And while they were at this work, which was difficult, their wives put in the night spending the money, which was easy. During that one night the nineteen wives spent an average of seven thousand dollars each out of the forty thousand in the sack—a hundred and thirty-three thousand altogether.

Next day there was a surprise for Jack Halliday. He noticed that the faces of the nineteen chief citizens and their wives bore that expression of peaceful and holy happiness again. He could not understand it, neither was he able to invent any remarks about it that could damage it or disturb it. And so it was his turn to be dissatisfied with life. His private guesses at the reasons for the happiness failed in all instances, upon examination. When he met Mrs. Wilcox and noticed the placid ecstasy in her face, he said to himself, "Her cat has had kittens"—and went and asked the cook; it was not so; the cook had detected the happiness, but did not know the cause. When Halliday found the duplicate ecstasy in the face of "Shadbelly" Billson (village nickname), he was sure some neighbor of Billson's had broken his leg, but inquiry showed that this had

not happened. The subdued ecstasy in Gregory Yates's face could mean but one thing—he was a mother-in-law short; it was another mistake. "And Pinkerton—Pinkerton—he has collected ten cents that he thought he was going to lose." And so on, and so on. In some cases the guesses had to remain in doubt, in the others they proved distinct errors. In the end Halliday said to himself, "Anyway, it foots up that there's nineteen Hadleyburg families temporarily in heaven: I don't know how it happened; I only know Providence is off duty to-day."

An architect and builder from the next State had lately ventured to set up a small business in this unpromising village, and his sign had now been hanging out a week. Not a customer yet; he was a discouraged man, and sorry he had come. But his weather changed suddenly now. First one and then another chief citizen's wife said to him privately:

"Come to my house Monday week—but say nothing about it for the present. We think of building."

He got eleven invitations that day. That night he wrote his daughter and broke off her match with her student. He said she could marry a mile higher than that.

Pinkerton the banker and two or three other well-to-do men planned country-seats—but waited. That kind don't count their chickens until they are hatched.

The Wilsons devised a grand new thing—a fancy-dress ball. They made no actual promises, but told all their acquaintanceship in confidence that they were thinking the matter over and thought they should give it—"and if we do, you will be invited, of course." People were surprised, and said, one to another, "Why, they are crazy, those poor Wilsons, they can't afford it." Several among the nineteen said privately to their husbands, "It is a good idea, we will keep still till their cheap thing is over, then we will give one that will make it sick."

The days drifted along, and the bill of future squanderings rose higher and higher, wilder and wilder, more and more foolish and reckless. It began to look as if every member of the nineteen would not only spend his whole forty thousand dollars before receiving-day, but be actually in debt by the time he got the money. In some cases light-headed people did not stop with planning to spend, they really spent—on credit. They bought land, mortgages, farms, speculative stocks, fine clothes, horses, and various other things, paid down the bonus, and made themselves liable for the rest—at ten days. Presently the sober second thought came, and Halliday noticed that a ghastly anxiety was beginning to show up in a good many faces. Again he was puzzled, and didn't know what to make of it. "The Wilcox kittens aren't dead, for they weren't born; no-

body's broken a leg; there's no shrinkage in mother-in-laws; *nothing* has happened—it is an insolvable mystery.”

There was another puzzled man, too—the Rev. Mr. Burgess. For days, wherever he went, people seemed to follow him or to be watching out for him; and if he ever found himself in a retired spot, a member of the nineteen would be sure to appear, thrust an envelope privately into his hand, whisper “To be opened at the town-hall Friday evening,” then vanish away like a guilty thing. He was expecting that there might be one claimant for the sack—doubtful, however, Goodson being dead—but it never occurred to him that all this crowd might be claimants. When the great Friday came at last, he found that he had nineteen envelopes.

### III

The town-hall had never looked finer. The platform at the end of it was backed by a showy draping of flags; at intervals along the walls were festoons of flags; the gallery fronts were clothed in flags; the supporting columns were swathed in flags; all this was to impress the stranger, for he would be there in considerable force, and in a large degree he would be connected with the press. The house was full. The 412 fixed seats were occupied; also the 68 extra chairs which had been packed into the aisles; the steps of the platform were occupied; some distinguished strangers were given seats on the platform; at the horseshoe of tables which fenced the front and sides of the platform sat a strong force of special correspondents who had come from everywhere. It was the best-dressed house the town had ever produced. There were some tolerably expensive toilets there, and in several cases the ladies who wore them had the look of being unfamiliar with that kind of clothes. At least the town thought they had that look, but the notion could have arisen from the town's knowledge of the fact that these ladies had never inhabited such clothes before.

The gold-sack stood on a little table at the front of the platform where all the house could see it. The bulk of the house gazed at it with a burning interest, a mouth-watering interest, a wistful and pathetic interest; a minority of nineteen couples gazed at it tenderly, lovingly, proprietarily, and the male half of this minority kept saying over to themselves the moving little impromptu speeches of thankfulness for the audience's applause and congratulations which they were presently going to get up and deliver. Every now and then one of these got a piece of paper out of his vest pocket and privately glanced at it to refresh his memory.

Of course there was a buzz of conversation going on—there always is; but at last when the Rev. Mr. Burgess rose and laid his hand on the sack he could hear his microbes gnaw, the place was so still. He related the curious history of the sack, then went on to

speaking in warm terms of Hadleyburg's old and well-earned reputation for spotless honesty, and of the town's just pride in this reputation. He said that this reputation was a treasure of priceless value; that under Providence its value had now become inestimably enhanced, for the recent episode had spread this fame far and wide, and thus had focussed the eyes of the American world upon this village, and made its name for all time, as he hoped and believed, a synonym for commercial incorruptibility. [*Applause.*] "And who is to be the guardian of this noble treasure—the community as a whole? No! The responsibility is individual, not communal. From this day forth each and every one of you is in his own person its special guardian and individually responsible that no harm shall come to it. Do you—does each of you—accept this great trust? [*Tumultuous assent.*] Then all is well. Transmit it to your children and to your children's children. To-day your purity is beyond reproach—see to it that it shall remain so. To-day there is not a person in your community who could be beguiled to touch a penny not his own—see to it that you abide in this grace. [*"We will! we will!"*] This is not the place to make comparisons between ourselves and other communities—some of them ungracious toward us; they have their ways, we have ours; let us be content. [*Applause.*] I am done. Under my hand, my friends, rests a stranger's eloquent recognition of what we are: through him the world will always henceforth know what we are. We do not know who he is, but in your name I utter your gratitude, and ask you to raise your voices in endorsement."

The house rose in a body and made the walls quake with the thunders of its thankfulness for the space of a long minute. Then it sat down, and Mr. Burgess took an envelope out of his pocket. The house held its breath while he slit the envelope open and took from it a slip of paper. He read its contents—slowly and impressively—the audience listening with tranced attention to this magic document, each of whose words stood for an ingot of gold:

"*The remark which I made to the distressed stranger was this: "You are very far from being a bad man; go, and reform."*' " Then he continued: "We shall know in a moment now whether the remark here quoted corresponds with the one concealed in the sack; and if that shall prove to be so—and it undoubtedly will—this sack of gold belongs to a fellow-citizen who will henceforth stand before the nation as the symbol of the special virtue which has made our town famous throughout the land—Mr. Billson!"

The house had gotten itself all ready to burst into a proper tornado of applause; but instead of doing it, it seemed stricken with a paralysis; there was a deep hush for a moment or two, then a wave of whispered murmurs swept the place—of about this tenor: "*Billson! oh, come, this is too thin! Twenty dollars to a stranger—or anybody*

—*Billson!* Tell it to the marines!” And now at this point the house caught its breath all of a sudden in a new access of astonishment, for it discovered that whereas in one part of the hall Deacon Billson was standing up with his head meekly bowed, in another part of it Lawyer Wilson was doing the same. There was a wondering silence now for a while. Everybody was puzzled, and nineteen couples were surprised and indignant.

Billson and Wilson turned and stared at each other. Billson asked, bitingly,

“Why do you rise, Mr. Wilson?”

“Because I have a right to. Perhaps you will be good enough to explain to the house why you rise?”

“With great pleasure. Because I wrote that paper.”

“It is an impudent falsity! I wrote it myself.”

It was Burgess’s turn to be paralyzed. He stood looking vacantly at first one of the men and then the other, and did not seem to know what to do. The house was stupefied. Lawyer Wilson spoke up, now, and said,

“I ask the Chair to read the name signed to that paper.”

That brought the Chair to itself, and it read out the name,

“‘John Wharton *Billson*.’ ”

“There!” shouted Billson, “what have you got to say for yourself, now? And what kind of apology are you going to make to me and to this insulted house for the imposture which you have attempted to play here?”

“No apologies are due, sir; and as for the rest of it, I publicly charge you with pilfering my note from Mr. Burgess and substituting a copy of it signed with your own name. There is no other way by which you could have gotten hold of the test-remark; I alone, of living men, possessed the secret of its wording.”

There was likely to be a scandalous state of things if this went on; everybody noticed with distress that the short-hand scribes were scribbling like mad; many people were crying “Chair, Chair! Order! order!” Burgess rapped with his gavel, and said:

“Let us not forget the proprieties due. There has evidently been a mistake somewhere, but surely that is all. If Mr. Wilson gave me an envelope—and I remembered now that he did—I still have it.”

He took one out of his pocket, opened it, glanced at it, looked surprised and worried, and stood silent a few moments. Then he waved his hand in a wandering and mechanical way, and made an effort or two to say something, then gave it up, despondently. Several voices cried out:

“Read it! read it! What is it?”

So he began in a dazed and sleep-walker fashion:

“‘*The remark which I made to the unhappy stranger was this:*

"*You are far from being a bad man.* [The house gazed at him, marvelling.] *Go, and reform.*"' [Murmurs: "Amazing! what can this mean?"] This one," said the Chair, "is signed Thurlow G. Wilson."

"There!" cried Wilson, "I reckon that settles it! I knew perfectly well my note was purloined."

"Purloined!" retorted Billson. "I'll let you know that neither you nor any man of your kidney must venture to—"

*The Chair.* "Order, gentlemen, order! Take your seats, both of you, please."

They obeyed, shaking their heads and grumbling angrily. The house was profoundly puzzled; it did not know what to do with this curious emergency. Presently Thompson got up. Thompson was the hatter. He would have liked to be a Nineteener; but such was not for him; his stock of hats was not considerable enough for the position. He said:

"Mr. Chairman, if I may be permitted to make a suggestion, can both of these gentlemen be right? I put it to you, sir, can both have happened to say the very same words to the stranger? It seems to me—"

The tanner got up and interrupted him. The tanner was a disgruntled man; he believed himself entitled to be a Nineteener, but he couldn't get recognition. It made him a little unpleasant in his ways and speech. Said he:

"Sho, *that's* not the point! *That* could happen—twice in a hundred years—but not the other thing. *Neither* of them gave the twenty dollars!" [A ripple of applause.]

Billson. "I did!"

Wilson. "I did!"

Then each accused the other of pilfering.

*The Chair.* "Order! Sit down, if you please—both of you. Neither of the notes has been out of my possession at any moment."

A Voice. "Good—that settles *that*!"

*The Tanner.* "Mr. Chairman, one thing is now plain: one of these men has been eavesdropping under the other one's bed, and filching family secrets. If it is not unparliamentary to suggest it, I will remark that both are equal to it. [*The Chair.* "Order! order!"] I withdraw the remark, sir, and will confine myself to suggesting that *if* one of them has overheard the other reveal the test-remark to his wife, we shall catch him now."

A Voice. "How?"

*The Tanner.* "Easily. The two have not quoted the remark in exactly the same words. You would have noticed that, if there hadn't been a considerable stretch of time and an exciting quarrel inserted between the two readings."

A Voice. "Name the difference."



*The Tanner.* "The word *very* is in Billson's note, and not in the other."

*Many Voices.* "That's so—he's right."

*The Tanner.* "And so, if the Chair will examine the test-remark in the sack, we shall know which of these two frauds—[*The Chair.* "Order!"]—which of these two adventurers—[*The Chair.* "Order! order!"]—which of these two gentlemen—[*laughter and applause*]—is entitled to wear the belt as being the first dishonest blather-skite ever bred in this town—which he has dishonored, and which will be a sultry place for him from now out!" [*Vigorous applause.*]

*Many Voices.* "Open it!—open the sack!"

Mr. Burgess made a slit in the sack, slid his hand in and brought out an envelope. In it were a couple of folded notes. He said:

"One of these is marked, 'Not to be examined until all written communications which have been addressed to the Chair—if any—shall have been read.' The other is marked '*The Test.*' Allow me. It is worded—to wit:

"'I do not require that the first half of the remark which was made to me by my benefactor shall be quoted with exactness, for it was not striking, and could be forgotten; but its closing fifteen words are quite striking, and I think easily rememberable; unless *these* shall be accurately reproduced, let the applicant be regarded as an imposter. My benefactor began by saying he seldom gave advice to any one, but that it always bore the hall-mark<sup>2</sup> of high value when he did give it. Then he said this—and it has never faded from my memory: "*You are far from being a bad man—*"'"

*Fifty Voices.* "That settles it—the money's Wilson's! Wilson! Wilson! Speech! Speech!"

People jumped up and crowded around Wilson, wringing his hand and congratulating fervently—meantime the Chair was hammering with the gavel and shouting:

"Order, gentlemen! Order! Order! Let me finish reading, please." When quiet was restored, the reading was resumed—as follows:

"'"Go, and reform—or, mark my words—some day, for your sins, you will die and go to hell or Hadleyburg—TRY AND MAKE IT THE FORMER."'"

A ghastly silence followed. First an angry cloud began to settle darkly upon the faces of the citizenship; after a pause the cloud began to rise, and a tickled expression tried to take its place; tried so hard that it was only kept under with great and painful difficulty; the reporters, the Brixtonites, and other strangers bent their heads down and shielded their faces with their hands, and managed to hold in by main strength and heroic courtesy. At this most inop-

2. *I.e.*, the mark of truth, from the official mark of the Goldsmiths' Company in London, guaranteeing the purity

of an object for sale at the Goldsmiths' Hall.

portune time burst upon the stillness the roar of a solitary voice—Jack Halliday's:

"That's got the hall-mark on it!"

Then the house let go, strangers and all. Even Mr. Burgess's gravity broke down presently, then the audience considered itself officially absolved from all restraint, and it made the most of its privilege. It was a good long laugh, and a tempestuously wholehearted one, but it ceased at last—long enough for Mr. Burgess to try to resume, and for the people to get their eyes partially wiped; then it broke out again; and afterward yet again; then at last Burgess was able to get out these serious words:

"It is useless to try to disguise the fact—we find ourselves in the presence of a matter of grave import. It involves the honor of your town, it strikes at the town's good name. The difference of a single word between the test-remarks offered by Mr. Wilson and Mr. Billson was itself a serious thing, since it indicated that one or the other of these gentlemen had committed a theft—"

The two men were sitting limp, nerveless, crushed; but at these words both were electrified into movement, and started to get up—

"Sit down!" said the Chair, sharply, and they obeyed. "That, as I have said, was a serious thing. And it was—but for only one of them. But the matter has become graver; for the honor of *both* is now in formidable peril. Shall I go even further, and say in inextricable peril? *Both* left out the crucial fifteen words." He paused. During several moments he allowed the pervading stillness to gather and deepen its impressive effects, then added: "There would seem to be but one way whereby this could happen. I ask these gentlemen—Was there *collusion?*—*agreement?*"

A low murmur sifted through the house; its import was, "He's got them both."

Billson was not used to emergencies; he sat in a helpless collapse. But Wilson was a lawyer. He struggled to his feet, pale and worried, and said:

"I ask the indulgence of the house while I explain this most painful matter. I am sorry to say what I am about to say, since it must inflict irreparable injury upon Mr. Billson, whom I have always esteemed and respected until now, and in whose invulnerability to temptation I entirely believed—as did you all. But for the preservation of my own honor I must speak—and with frankness. I confess with shame—and I now beseech your pardon for it—that I said to the ruined stranger all of the words contained in the test-remark, including the disparaging fifteen. [*Sensation.*] When the late publication was made I recalled them, and I resolved to claim the sack of coin, for by every right I was entitled to it. Now I will ask you to consider this point, and weigh it well:

that stranger's gratitude to me that night knew no bounds; he said himself that he could find no words for it that were adequate, and that if he should ever be able he would repay me a thousandfold. Now, then, I ask you this: could I expect—could I believe—could I even remotely imagine—that, feeling as he did, he would do so ungrateful a thing as to add those quite unnecessary fifteen words to his test?—set a trap for me?—expose me as a slanderer of my own town before my own people assembled in a public hall? It was preposterous; it was impossible. His test would contain only the kindly opening clause of my remark. Of that I had no shadow of doubt. You would have thought as I did. You would not have expected a base betrayal from one whom you had befriended and against whom you had committed no offence. And so, with perfect confidence, perfect trust, I wrote on a piece of paper the opening words—ending with 'Go, and reform,'—and signed it. When I was about to put it in an envelope I was called into my back office, and without thinking I left the paper lying open on my desk." He stopped, turned his head slowly toward Billson, waited a moment, then added: "I ask you to note this: when I returned, a little later, Mr. Billson was retiring by my street door." (*Sensation.*)

In a moment Billson was on his feet and shouting:

"It's a lie! It's an infamous lie!"

*The Chair.* "Be seated, sir! Mr. Wilson has the floor."

Billson's friends pulled him into his seat and quieted him, and Wilson went on:

"Those are the simple facts. My note was now lying in a different place on the table from where I had left it. I noticed that, but attached no importance to it, thinking a draught had blown it there. That Mr. Billson would read a private paper was a thing which could not occur to me; he was an honorable man, and he would be above that. If you will allow me to say it, I think his extra word 'very' stands explained; it is attributable to a defect of memory. I was the only man in the world who could furnish here any detail of the test-mark—by *honorable* means. I have finished."

There is nothing in the world like a persuasive speech to fuddle the mental apparatus and upset the convictions and debauch the emotions of an audience not practised in the tricks and delusions of oratory. Wilson sat down victorious. The house submerged him in tides of approving applause; friends swarmed to him and shook him by the hand and congratulated him, and Billson was shouted down and not allowed to say a word. The Chair hammered and hammered with its gavel, and kept shouting:

"But let us proceed, gentlemen, let us proceed!"

At last there was a measurable degree of quiet, and the hatter said:

"But what is there to proceed with, sir, but to deliver the money?"

*Voices.* "That's it! That's it! Come forward, Wilson!"

*The Hatter.* "I move three cheers for Mr. Wilson, Symbol of the special virtue which—"

The cheers burst forth before he could finish; and in the midst of them—and in the midst of the clamor of the gavel also—some enthusiasts mounted Wilson on a big friend's shoulder and were going to fetch him in triumph to the platform. The Chair's voice now rose above the noise—

"Order! To your places! You forget that there is still a document to be read." When quiet had been restored he took up the document, and was going to read it, but laid it down again, saying, "I forgot; this is not to be read until all written communications received by me have first been read." He took an envelope out of his pocket, removed its enclosure, glanced at it—seemed astonished—held it out and gazed at it—stared at it.

Twenty or thirty voices cried out:

"What is it? Read it! read it!"

And he did—slowly, and wondering:

"The remark which I made to the stranger—[*Voices.* "Hello! how's this?"]—was this: "You are far from being a bad man. [*Voices.* "Great Scott!"] Go, and reform."'" [*Voice.* "Oh, saw my leg off!"] Signed by Mr. Pinkerton the banker."

The pandemonium of delight which turned itself loose now was of a sort to make the judicious weep. Those whose withers were unwrung laughed till the tears ran down; the reporters, in throes of laughter, set down disordered pothooks which would never in the world be decipherable; and a sleeping dog jumped up, scared out of its wits, and barked itself crazy at the turmoil. All manner of cries were scattered through the din: "We're getting rich—two Symbols of Incorruptibility!—without counting Billson!" "*Three!*—count Shadbelly in—we can't have too many!" "All right—Billson's elected!" "Alas, poor Wilson—victim of two thieves!"

*A Powerful Voice.* "Silence! The Chair's fished up something more out of its pocket."

*Voices.* "Hurrah! Is it something fresh? Read it! read! read!"

*The Chair* [reading]. "The remark which I made,' etc. 'You are far from being a bad man. Go,' etc. Signed, 'Gregory Yates.'"

*Tornado of Voices.* "Four Symbols!" "'Rah for Yates!" "Fish again!"

The house was in a roaring humor now, and ready to get all the the fun out of the occasion that might be in it. Several Nineteeners, looking pale and distressed, got up and began to work their way toward the aisles, but a score of shouts went up:

"The doors, the doors—close the doors; no Incorruptible shall

leave this place! Sit down, everybody!"

The mandate was obeyed.

"Fish again! Read! read!"

The Chair fished again, and once more the familiar words began to fall from its lips—" 'You are far from being a bad man—' "

"Name! name! What's his name?"

" 'L. Ingoldsby Sargent.' "

"Five elected! Pile up the Symbols! Go on, go on!"

" 'You are far from being a bad—' "

"Name! name!"

" 'Nicholas Whitworth.' "

"Hooray! hooray! it's a symbolical day!"

Somebody wailed in, and began to sing this rhyme (leaving out "it's") to the lovely "Mikado" tune of "When a man's afraid, a beautiful maid—";<sup>3</sup> the audience joined in, with joy; then, just in time, somebody contributed another line—

"And don't you this forget——"

The house roared it out. A third line was at once furnished—

"Corruptibles far from Hadleyburg are——"

The house roared that one too. As the last note died, Jack Halliday's voice rose high and clear, freighted with a final line—

"But the Symbols are here, you bet!"

That was sung, with booming enthusiasm. Then the happy house started in at the beginning and sang the four lines through twice, with immense swing and dash, and finished up with a crashing three-times-three and a tiger for "Hadleyburg the Incorruptible and all Symbols of it which we shall find worthy to receive the hall-mark to-night."

Then the shoutings at the Chair began again, all over the place:

"Go on! go on! Read! read some more! Read all you've got!"

"That's it—go on! We are winning eternal celebrity!"

A dozen men got up now and began to protest. 'They said that this farce was the work of some abandoned joker, and was an insult to the whole community. Without a doubt these signatures were all forgeries—

"Sit down! sit down! Shut up! You are confessing. We'll find your names in the lot."

"Mr. Chairman, how many of those envelopes have you got?"

The Chair counted.

3. "When a man's afraid, / A beautiful maid / Is a cheering sight to see" (*The Mikado*, Act II).

"Together with those that have been already examined, there are nineteen."

A storm of derisive applause broke out.

"Perhaps they all contain the secret. I move that you open them all and read every signature that is attached to a note of that sort—and read also the first eight words of the note."

"Second the motion!"

It was put and carried—uproariously. Then poor old Richards got up, and his wife rose and stood at his side. Her head was bent down, so that none might see that she was crying. Her husband gave her his arm, and so supporting her, he began to speak in a quavering voice:

"My friends, you have known us two—Mary and me—all our lives, and I think you have liked us and respected us—"

The Chair interrupted him:

"Allow me. It is quite true—that which you are saying, Mr. Richards; this town *does* know you two; it *does* like you; it *does* respect you; more—it honors you and *loves* you—"

Halliday's voice rang out:

"That's the hall-marked truth, too! If the Chair is right, let the house speak up and say it. Rise! Now, then—hip! hip! hip!—all together!"

The house rose in mass, faced toward the old couple eagerly, filled the air with a snowstorm of waving handkerchiefs, and delivered the cheers with all its affectionate heart.

The Chair then continued:

"What I was going to say is this: We know your good heart, Mr. Richards, but this is not a time for the exercise of charity toward offenders. [Shouts of "Right! right!"] I see your generous purpose in your face, but I cannot allow you to plead for these men—"

"But I was going to—"

"Please take your seat, Mr. Richards. We must examine the rest of these notes—simple fairness to the men who have already been exposed requires this. As soon as that has been done—I give you my word for this—you shall be heard."

*Many Voices.* "Right!—the Chair is right—no interruption can be permitted at this stage! Go on!—the names! the names!—according to the terms of the motion!"

The old couple sat reluctantly down, and the husband whispered to the wife, "It is pitifully hard to have to wait; the shame will be greater than ever when they find we were only going to plead for *ourselves*."

Straightway the jollity broke loose again with the reading of the names.

"'You are far from being a bad man—' Signature, 'Robert J. Tit-

marsh.'

" 'You are far from being a bad man—' Signature, 'Eliphalet Weeks.'

" 'You are far from being a bad man—' Signature, 'Oscar B. Wilder.' "

At this point the house lit upon the idea of taking the eight words out of the Chairman's hands. He was not unthankful for that. Thenceforward he held up each note in its turn, and waited. The house droned out the eight words in a massed and measured and musical deep volume of sound (with a daringly close resemblance to a well-known church chant)—" 'You are f-a-r from being a b-a-a-d man.' " Then the Chair said, "Signature, 'Archibald Wilcox.' " And so on, and so on, name after name, and everybody had an increasingly and gloriously good time except the wretched Nineteen. Now and then, when a particularly shining name was called, the house made the Chair wait while it chanted the whole of the test-remark from the beginning to the closing words, "And go to hell or Hadleyburg—try and make it the for-or-m-e-r!" and in these special cases they added a grand and agonized and imposing "A-a-a-men!"

The list dwindled, dwindled, dwindled, poor old Richards keeping tally of the count, wincing when a name resembling his own was pronounced, and waiting in miserable suspense for the time to come when it would be his humiliating privilege to rise with Mary and finish his plea, which he was intending to word thus: ". . . for until now we have never done any wrong thing, but have gone our humble way unreprieved. We are very poor, we are old, and have no chick nor child to help us; we were sorely tempted, and we fell. It was my purpose when I got up before to make confession and beg that my name might not be read out in this public place, for it seemed to us that we could not bear it; but I was prevented. It was just; it was our place to suffer with the rest. It has been hard for us. It is the first time we have ever heard our name fall from any one's lips—sullied. Be merciful—for the sake of the better days; make our shame as light to bear as in your charity you can." At this point in his reverie Mary nudged him, perceiving that his mind was absent. The house was chanting. "You are f-a-r," etc.

"Be ready," Mary whispered. "Your name comes now; he has read eighteen."

The chant ended.

"Next! next! next!" came volleying from all over the house.

Burgess put his hand into his pocket. The old couple, trembling, began to rise, Burgess fumbled a moment, then said,

"I find I have read them all."

Faint with joy and surprise, the couple sank into their seats, and

Mary whispered:

"Oh, bless God, we are saved!—he has lost ours—I wouldn't give this for a hundred of those sacks!"

The house burst out with its "Mikado" travesty, and sang it three times with ever-increasing enthusiasm, rising to its feet when it reached for the third time the closing line—

"But the Symbols are here, you bet!"

and finishing up with cheers and a tiger for "Hadleyburg purity and our eighteen immortal representatives of it."

Then Wingate, the saddler, got up and proposed cheers "for the cleanest man in town, the one solitary important citizen in it who didn't try to steal that money—Edward Richards."

They were given with great and moving heartiness; then somebody proposed that Richards be elected sole Guardian and Symbol of the now Sacred Hadleyburg Tradition, with power and right to stand up and look the whole sarcastic world in the face.

Passed, by acclamation; then they sang the "Mikado" again, and ended it with,

"And there's *one* Symbol left, you bet!"

There was a pause; then—

A Voice. "Now, then, who's to get the sack?"

*The Tanner (with bitter sarcasm).* "That's easy. The money has to be divided among the eighteen Incorruptibles. They gave the suffering stranger twenty dollars apiece—and that remark—each in his turn—it took twenty-two minutes for the procession to move past. Staked the stranger—total contribution, \$360. All they want is just the loan back—and interest—forty thousand dollars altogether."

*Many voices [derisively].* "That's it! Divvy! divvy! Be kind to the poor—don't keep them waiting!"

*The Chair.* "Order! I now offer the stranger's remaining document. It says: 'If no claimant shall appear [*grand chorus of groans*], I desire that you open the sack and count out the money to the principal citizens of your town, they to take it in trust [*Cries of "Oh! Oh! Oh!"*], and use it in such ways as to them shall seem best for the propagation and preservation of your community's noble reputation for incorruptible honesty [*more cries*]—a reputation to which their names and their efforts will add a new and far-reaching lustre.' [*Enthusiastic outburst of sarcastic applause.*] That seems to be all. No—here is a postscript:

"P. S.—CITIZENS OF HADLEYBURG: There is no test-remark—nobody made one. [*Great sensation.*] There wasn't any pauper stranger, nor any twenty-dollar contribution, nor any accompanying benedic-



tion and compliment—these are all inventions. [*General buzz and hum of astonishment and delight.*] Allow me to tell my story—it will take but a word or two. I passed through your town at a certain time, and received a deep offense which I had not earned. Any other man would have been content to kill one or two of you and call it square, but to me that would have been a trivial revenge, and inadequate; for the dead do not *suffer*. Besides, I could not kill you all—and, anyway, made as I am, even that would not have satisfied me. I wanted to damage every man in the place, and every woman—and not in their bodies or in their estate, but in their vanity—the place where feeble and foolish people are most vulnerable. So I disguised myself and came back and studied you. You were easy game. You had an old and lofty reputation for honesty, and naturally you were proud of it—it was your treasure of treasures, the very apple of your eye. As soon as I found out that you carefully and vigilantly kept yourselves and your children *out of temptation*, I knew how to proceed. Why, you simple creatures, the weakest of all weak things is a virtue which has not been tested in the fire. I laid a plan, and gathered a list of names. My project was to corrupt Hadleyburg the incorruptible. My idea was to make liars and thieves of nearly half a hundred smirchless men and women who had never in their lives uttered a lie or stolen a penny. I was afraid of Goodson. He was neither born nor reared in Hadleyburg. I was afraid that if I started to operate my scheme by getting my letter laid before you, you would say to yourselves, “Goodson is the only man among us who would give away twenty dollars to a poor devil”—and then you might not bite at my bait. But Heaven took Goodson; then I knew I was safe, and I set my trap and baited it. It may be that I shall not catch all the men to whom I mailed the pretended test secret, but I shall catch the most of them, if I know Hadleyburg nature. [*Voices.* “Right—he got every last one of them.”] I believe they will even steal ostensible *gamble-money*, rather than miss, poor, tempted, and mistreated fellows. I am hoping to eternally and everlastingly squelch your vanity and give Hadleyburg a new renown—one that will *stick*—and spread far. If I have succeeded, open the sack and summon the Committee on Propagation and Preservation of the Hadleyburg Reputation.’”

*A Cyclone of Voices.* “Open it! Open it! The Eighteen to the front! Committee on Propagation of the Tradition! Forward—the Incorruptibles!”

The Chair ripped the sack wide, and gathered up a handful of bright, broad, yellow coins, shook them together, then examined them—

“Friends, they are only gilded disks of lead!”

There was a crashing outbreak of delight over this news, and when

the noise had subsided, the tanner called out:

"By right of apparent seniority in this business, Mr. Wilson is Chairman of the Committee on Propagation of the Tradition. I suggest that he step forward on behalf of his pals, and receive in trust the money."

*A Hundred Voices.* "Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! Speech! Speech!"

*Wilson [in a voice trembling with anger].* "You will allow me to say, without apologies for my language, *damn* the money!"

*A Voice.* "Oh, and him a Baptist!"

*A Voice.* "Seventeen Symbols left! Step up, gentlemen, and assume your trust!"

There was a pause—no response.

*The Saddler.* "Mr. Chairman, we've got *one* clean man left, anyway, out of the late aristocracy; and he needs money, and deserves it. I move that you appoint Jack Halliday to get up there and auction off that sack of gilt twenty-dollar pieces, and give the result to the right man—the man whom Hadleyburg delights to honor—Edward Richards."

This was received with great enthusiasm, the dog taking a hand again; the saddler started the bids at a dollar, the Brixton folk and Barnum's representative fought hard for it, the people cheered every jump that the bids made, the excitement climbed moment by moment higher and higher, the bidders got on their mettle and grew steadily more and more daring, more and more determined, the jumps went from a dollar up to five, then to ten, then to twenty, then fifty, then to a hundred, then—

At the beginning of the auction Richards whispered in distress to his wife: "Oh, Mary, can we allow it? It—it—you see, it is an honor-reward, a testimonial to purity of character, and—and—can we allow it? Hadn't I better get up and—Oh, Mary, what ought we to do?—what do you think we—" [*Halliday's voice.* "*Fifteen I'm bid!—fifteen for the sack!—twenty!—ah, thanks!—thirty—thanks again! Thirty, thirty, thirty!—do I hear forty?—forty it is! Keep the ball rolling, gentlemen, keep it rolling!—fifty!—thanks, noble Roman!—going at fifty, fifty, fifty!—seventy!—ninety!—splendid!—a hundred!—pile it up, pile it up!—hundred and twenty—forty!—just in time!—hundred and fifty!—two hundred!—superb! Do I hear two h— thanks!—two hundred and fifty!—*"]

"It is another temptation, Edward—I'm all in a tremble—but, oh, we've escaped *one* temptation, and that ought to warn us, to—["*Six did I hear?—thanks!—six fifty, six f—SEVEN hundred!*"] And yet, Edward, when you think—nobody susp—["*Eight hundred dollars!—hurrah!—make it nine!—Mr. Parsons, did I hear you say—thanks!—nine!—this noble sack of virgin lead going at only nine hundred dollars, gilding and all—come! do I hear—a thousand!—*

*gratefully yours!—did some one say eleven?—a sack which is going to be the most celebrated in the whole Uni——”]* Oh, Edward” (*beginning to sob*), “we are so poor!—but—but—do as you think best—do as you think best.”

Edward fell—that is, he sat still; sat with a conscience which was not satisfied, but which was overpowered by circumstances.

Meanwhile a stranger, who looked like an amateur detective gotten up as an impossible English earl, had been watching the evening’s proceedings with manifest interest, and with a contented expression in his face; and he had been privately commenting to himself. He was now soliloquizing somewhat like this: “None of the Eighteen are bidding; that is not satisfactory; I must change that—the dramatic unities require it; they must buy the sack they tried to steal; they must pay a heavy price, too—some of them are rich. And another thing, when I make a mistake in Hadleyburg nature the man that puts that error upon me is entitled to a high honorarium, and some one must pay it. This poor old Richards has brought my judgment to shame; he is an honest man;—I don’t understand it, but I acknowledge it. Yes, he saw my deuces—and with a straight flush, and by rights the pot is his. And it shall be a jackpot, too, if I can manage it. He disappointed me, but let that pass.”

He was watching the bidding. At a thousand, the market broke; the prices tumbled swiftly. He waited—and still watched. One competitor dropped out; then another, and another. He put in a bid or two, now. When the bids had sunk to ten dollars, he added a five; some one raised him a three; he waited a moment, then flung in a fifty-dollar jump, and the sack was his—at \$1,282. The house broke out in cheers—then stopped; for he was on his feet and had lifted his hand. He began to speak.

“I desire to say a word, and ask a favor. I am a speculator in rarities, and I have dealings with persons interested in numismatics all over the world. I can make a profit on this purchase, just as it stands; but there is a way, if I can get your approval, whereby I can make every one of these leaden twenty-dollar pieces worth its face in gold, and perhaps more. Grant me that approval, and I will give part of my gains to your Mr. Richards, whose invulnerable probity you have so justly and so cordially recognized to-night; his share shall be ten thousand dollars, and I will hand him the money to-morrow. [*Great applause from the house.* But the “invulnerable probity” made the Richardses blush prettily; however, it went for modesty, and did no harm.] If you will pass my proposition by a good majority—I would like a two-thirds vote—I will regard that as the town’s consent, and that is all I ask. Rarities are always helped by any device which will rouse curiosity and compel remark. Now if I may have your permission to stamp upon the faces of each of

these ostensible coins the names of the eighteen gentlemen who—”

Nine-tenths of the audience were on their feet in a moment—dog and all—and the proposition was carried with a whirlwind of approving applause and laughter.

They sat down, and all the Symbols except “Dr.” Clay Harkness got up, violently protesting against the proposed outrage, and threatening to—

“I beg you not to threaten me,” said the stranger, calmly. “I know my legal rights, and am not accustomed to being frightened at bluster.” [*Applause.*] He sat down. “Dr.” Harkness saw an opportunity here. He was one of the two very rich men of the place, and Pinkerton was the other. Harkness was proprietor of a mint; that is to say, a popular patent medicine. He was running for the Legislature on one ticket, and Pinkerton on the other. It was a close race and a hot one, and getting hotter every day. Both had strong appetites for money; each had bought a great tract of land, with a purpose; there was going to be a new railway, and each wanted to be in the Legislature and help locate the route to his own advantage; a single vote might make the decision, and with it two or three fortunes. The stake was large, and Harkness was a daring speculator. He was sitting close to the stranger. He leaned over while one or another of the other Symbols was entertaining the house with protests and appeals, and asked, in a whisper,

“What is your price for the sack?”

“Forty thousand dollars.”

“I’ll give you twenty.”

“No.”

“Twenty-five.”

“No.”

“Say thirty.”

“The price is forty thousand dollars; not a penny less.”

“All right, I’ll give it. I will come to the hotel at ten in the morning. I don’t want it known; will see you privately.”

“Very good.” Then the stranger got up and said to the house:

“I find it late. The speeches of these gentlemen are not without merit, not without interest, not without grace; yet if I may be excused I will take my leave. I thank you for the great favor which you have shown me in granting my petition. I ask the Chair to keep the sack for me until to-morrow, and to hand these three five-hundred-dollar notes to Mr. Richards.” They were passed up to the Chair. “At nine I will call for the sack, and at eleven will deliver the rest of the ten thousand to Mr. Richards in person, at his home. Good-night.”

Then he slipped out, and left the audience making a vast noise,

which was composed of a mixture of cheers, the "Mikado" song, dog-disapproval, and the chant, "you are f-a-r from being a b-a-a-d man—a-a-a-men!"

IV

At home the Richardses had to endure congratulations and compliments until midnight. Then they were left to themselves. They looked a little sad, and they sat silent and thinking. Finally Mary sighed and said,

"Do you think we are to blame, Edward—*much* to blame?" and her eyes wandered to the accusing triplet of big bank-notes lying on the table, where the congratulators had been gloating over them and reverently fingering them. Edward did not answer at once; then he brought out a sigh and said, hesitatingly:

"We—we couldn't help it, Mary. It—well, it was ordered. *All* things are."

Mary glanced up and looked at him steadily, but he didn't return the look. Presently she said:

"I thought congratulations and praises always tasted good. But—it seems to me, now—Edward?"

"Well?"

"Are you going to stay in the bank?"

"N-no."

"Resign?"

"In the morning—by note."

"It does seem best."

Richards bowed his head in his hands and muttered:

"Before, I was not afraid to let oceans of people's money pour through my hands, but—Mary, I am so tired, so tired—"

"We will go to bed."

At nine in the morning the stranger called for the sack and took it to the hotel in a cab. At ten Harkness had a talk with him privately. The stranger asked for and got five checks on a metropolitan bank—drawn to "Bearer,"—four for \$1,500 each, and one for \$34,000. He put one of the former in his pocket-book, and the remainder, representing \$38,500, he put in an envelope, and with these he added a note, which he wrote after Harkness was gone. At eleven he called at the Richards house and knocked. Mrs. Richards peeped through the shutters, then went and received the envelope, and the stranger disappeared without a word. She came back flushed and a little unsteady on her legs, and gasped out:

"I am sure I recognized him! Last night it seemed to me that maybe I had seen him somewhere before."

"He is the man that brought the sack here?"

"I am almost sure of it."

"Then he is the ostensible Stephenson too, and sold every important citizen in this town with his bogus secret. Now if he has sent checks instead of money, we are sold too, after we thought we had escaped. I was beginning to feel fairly comfortable once more, after my night's rest, but the look of that envelope makes me sick. It isn't fat enough; \$8,500 in even the largest bank-notes makes more bulk than that."

"Edward, why do you object to checks?"

"Checks signed by Stephenson! I am resigned to take the \$8,500 if it could come in bank-notes—for it does seem that it was so ordered, Mary—but I have never had much courage, and I have not the pluck to try to market a check signed with that disastrous name. It would be a trap. That man tried to catch me; we escaped somehow or other; and now he is trying a new way. If it is checks——"

"Oh, Edward, it is *too* bad!" and she held up the checks and began to cry.

"Put them in the fire! quick! we mustn't be tempted. It is a trick to make the world laugh at *us*, along with the rest, and—Give them to *me*, since you can't do it!" He snatched them and tried to hold his grip till he could get to the stove; but he was human, he was a cashier, and he stopped a moment to make sure of the signature. Then he came near to fainting.

"Fan me, Mary, fan me! They are the same as gold!"

"Oh, how lovely, Edward! Why?"

"Signed by Harkness. What can the mystery of that be, Mary?"

"Edward, do you think——"

"Look here—look at this! Fifteen—fifteen—fifteen—thirty-four. Thirty-eight thousand five hundred! Mary, the sack isn't worth twelve dollars, and Harkness—apparently—has paid about par for it."

"And does it all come to us, do you think—instead of the ten thousand?"

"Why, it looks like it. And the checks are made to 'Bearer,' too."

"Is that good, Edward? What is it for?"

"A hint to collect them at some distant bank, I reckon. Perhaps Harkness doesn't want the matter known. What is that—a note?"

"Yes. It was with the checks."

It was in the "Stephenson" handwriting, but there was no signature. It said:

*"I am a disappointed man. Your honesty is beyond the reach of temptation. I had a different idea about it, but I wronged you in that, and I beg pardon, and do it sincerely. I honor you—and that is sincere, too. This town is not worthy to kiss the hem of your*

*garment. Dear sir, I made a square bet with myself that there were nineteen debauchable men in your self-righteous community. I have lost. Take the whole pot, you are entitled to it."*

Richards drew a deep sigh, and said:

"It seems written with fire—it burns so. Mary—I am miserable again."

"I, too. Ah, dear, I wish——"

"To think, Mary—he *believes* in me."

"Oh, don't, Edward—I can't bear it."

"If those beautiful words were deserved, Mary—and God knows I believed I deserved them once—I think I could give the forty thousand dollars for them. And I would put that paper away, as representing more than gold and jewels, and keep it always. But now—We could not live in the shadow of its accusing presence, Mary."

He put it in the fire.

A messenger arrived and delivered an envelope. Richards took from it a note and read it; it was from Burgess.

*"You saved me, in a difficult time. I saved you last night. It was at cost of a lie, but I made the sacrifice freely, and out of grateful heart. None in this village knows so well as I know how brave and good and noble you are. At bottom you cannot respect me, knowing as you do of that matter of which I am accused, and by the general voice condemned; but I beg that you will at least believe that I am a grateful man; it will help me to bear my burden.*

[Signed] "BURGESS."

"Saved, once more. And on such terms!" He put the note in the fire. "I—I wish I were dead, Mary, I wish I were out of it all."

"Oh, these are bitter, bitter days, Edward. The stabs, through their very generosity, are so deep—and they come so fast!"

Three days before the election each of two thousand voters suddenly found himself in possession of a prized memento—one of the renowned bogus double-eagles. Around one of its faces was stamped these words: "THE REMARK I MADE TO THE POOR STRANGER WAS—" Around the other face was stamped these: "GO, AND REFORM. [SIGNED] PINKERTON." Thus the entire remaining refuse of the renowned joke was emptied upon a single head, and with calamitous effect. It revived the recent vast laugh and concentrated it upon Pinkerton; and Harkness's election was a walk-over.

Within twenty-four hours after the Richardses had received their checks their consciences were quieting down, discouraged; the old couple were learning to reconcile themselves to the sin which they

had committed. But they were to learn, now, that a sin takes on new and real terrors when there seems a chance that it is going to be found out. This gives it a fresh and most substantial and important aspect. At church the morning sermon was of the usual pattern; it was the same old things said in the same old way; they had heard them a thousand times and found them innocuous, next to meaningless, and easy to sleep under; but now it was different: the sermon seemed to bristle with accusations; it seemed aimed straight and specially at people who were concealing deadly sins. After church they got away from the mob of congratulators as soon as they could, and hurried homeward, chilled to the bone at they did not know what—vague, shadowy, indefinite fears. And by chance they caught a glimpse of Mr. Burgess as he turned a corner. He paid no attention to their nod of recognition! He hadn't seen it; but they did not know that. What could his conduct mean? It might mean—it might mean—oh, a dozen dreadful things. Was it possible that he knew that Richards could have cleared him of guilt in that bygone time, and had been silently waiting for a chance to even up accounts? At home, in their distress they got to imagining that their servant might have been in the next room listening when Richards revealed the secret to his wife that he knew of Burgess's innocence; next, Richards began to imagine that he had heard the swish of a gown in there at that time; next, he was sure he *had* heard it. They would call Sarah in, on a pretext, and watch her face: if she had been betraying them to Mr. Burgess, it would show in her manner. They asked her some questions—questions which were so random and incoherent and seemingly purposeless that the girl felt sure that the old people's mind had been affected by their sudden good fortune; the sharp and watchful gaze which they bent upon her frightened her, and that completed the business. She blushed, she became nervous and confused, and to the old people these were plain signs of guilt—guilt of some fearful sort or other—without doubt she was a spy and a traitor. When they were alone again they began to piece many unrelated things together and get horrible results out of the combination. When things had got about to the worst, Richards was delivered of a sudden gasp, and his wife asked:

"Oh, what is it?—what is it?"

"The note—Burgess's note! Its language was sarcastic, I see it now." He quoted: "'At bottom you cannot respect me, *knowing*, as you do, of *that matter* of which I am accused'—oh, it is perfectly plain, now, God help me! He knows that I know! You see the ingenuity of the phrasing. It was a trap—and like a fool, I walked into it. And Mary—?"

"Oh, it is dreadful—I know what your are going to say—he didn't



return your transcript of the pretended test-remark."

"No—kept it to destroy us with. Mary, he has exposed us to some already. I know it—I know it well. I saw it in a dozen faces after church. Ah, he wouldn't answer our nod of recognition—he knew what he had been doing!"

In the night the doctor was called. The news went around in the morning that the old couple were rather seriously ill—prostrated by the exhausting excitement growing out of their great windfall, the congratulations, and the late hours, the doctor said. The town was sincerely distressed; for these old people were about all it had left to be proud of, now.

Two days later the news was worse. The old couple were delirious, and were doing strange things. By witness of the nurses, Richards had exhibited checks—for \$8,500? No—for an amazing sum—\$38,500! What could be the explanation of this g gantic piece of luck?

The following day the nurses had more news—and wonderful. They had concluded to hide the checks, lest harm come to them; but when they searched they were gone from under the patient's pillow—vanished away. The patient said:

"Let the pillow alone; what do you want?"

"We thought it best that the checks——"

"You will never see them again—they are destroyed. They came from Satan. I saw the hell-brand on them, and I knew they were sent to betray me to sin." Then he fell to gabbling strange and dreadful things which were not clearly understandable, and which the doctor admonished them to keep to themselves.

Richards was right; the checks were never seen again.

A nurse must have talked in her sleep, for within two days the forbidden gabblings were the property of the town; and they were of a surprising sort. They seemed to indicate that Richards had been a claimant for the sack himself, and that Burgess had concealed that fact and then maliciously betrayed it.

Burgess was taxed with this and stoutly denied it. And he said it was not fair to attach weight to the chatter of a sick old man who was out of his mind. Still, suspicion was in the air, and there was much talk.

After a day or two it was reported that Mrs. Richards's delirious deliveries were getting to be duplicates of her husband's. Suspicion flamed up into conviction, now, and the town's pride in the purity of its one undiscredited important citizen began to dim down and flicker toward extinction.

Six days passed, then came more news. The old couple were dying. Richards's mind cleared in his latest hour, and he sent for Burgess. Burgess said:

"Let the room be cleared. I think he wishes to say something in privacy."

"No!" said Richards; "I want witnesses. I want you all to hear my confession, so that I may die a man, and not a dog. I was clean—artificially—like the rest; and like the rest I fell when temptation came. I signed a lie, and claimed the miserable sack. Mr. Burgess remembered that I had done him a service, and in gratitude (and ignorance) he suppressed my claim and saved me. You know the thing that was charged against Burgess years ago. My testimony, and mine alone, could have cleared him, and I was a coward, and left him to suffer disgrace—"

"No—no—Mr. Richards, you—"

"My servant betrayed my secret to him—"

"No one has betrayed anything to me—"

—"and then he did a natural and justifiable thing, he repented of the saving kindness which he had done me, and he *exposed* me—as I deserved—"

"Never!—I make oath—"

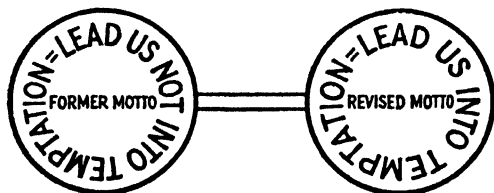
"Out of my heart I forgive him."

Burgess's impassioned protestations fell upon deaf ears; the dying man passed away without knowing that once more he had done poor Burgess a wrong. The old wife died that night.

The last of the sacred Nineteen had fallen a prey to the fiendish sack; the town was stripped of the last rag of its ancient glory. Its mourning was not showy, but it was deep.

By act of the Legislature—upon prayer and petition—Hadleyburg was allowed to change its name to (never mind what—I will not give it away), and leave one word out of the motto that for many generations had graced the town's official seal.

It is an honest town once more, and the man will have to rise early that catches it napping again.



## BRET HARTE

(1836-1902)

Through the dramatic, romantic, and humorous use of regional material from the gold camps of the Sierras, Bret Harte brought the heady smells of pines and campfires, the raucous sounds of Poker Flat and other ephemeral mining towns, and the hilarious contrast of western and eastern dude to the fascinated attention of the eastern states and England. He was born in Albany, New York. At the age of eighteen he accompanied his widowed mother to California, where he became a compositor on a small Humboldt County newspaper, the *North-ern California*. Moving to San Francisco as typesetter on the *Golden Era*, he soon became its editor, and later was editor of the *Californian*. In 1864 he was appointed secretary to the California Mint, a sinecure leaving him free to write.

He published a volume of poems and a book of sketches in 1867 and then, as editor of the *Overland Monthly*—the *Atlantic Monthly* of the Pacific slope—he wrote a story which carried the name of Bret Harte across the continent, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (August, 1868). Five months later came "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" (January, 1869), and then a humorous poem, "Plain Language from Truthful James" (September, 1870), each acclaimed on both seaboards. The poem, popularly called "The Heathen Chinee," was approvingly reprinted by

American newspapers, and swept on to England. Abandoning California, refusing offers from Chicago, Harte chose Boston; there, feted by the Saturday Club, he became a contributing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* with a stipend of ten thousand dollars for which he was to supply twelve selections.

Harte disappointed the editors of the *Atlantic* by his decline in effort and performance. Though popularity lingered through the appearance of several volumes of short stories, he could not repeat his first success. His ambition for worldly recognition caused him to seek an appointment in the diplomatic service. He served as United States consul at Crefeld, Germany, in 1878, and at Glasgow from 1880 to 1885. He collected his journalistic work into numerous books: *Tales of the Argonauts* (1875), *A Sappho of Green Springs* (1891), *Colonel Starbottle's Client* (1892), *A Protégée of Jack Hamlin's* (1894), *The Bell-Ringer of Angel's* (1894), *Mr. Jack Hamlin's Meditation* (1899), and *Condensed Novels* (1902). Harte also wrote several novels and novelettes, of which *M'liss: An Idyll of Red Mountain* (1873) and *Gabriel Conroy* (1876) continue to have some appeal. He tried his hand at the drama, collaborating with Mark Twain upon an unsuccessful play, *Ah Sin* (1877). The phenomenal success of his early

work in England was largely responsible for his decision to remain there at the conclusion of his diplomatic service.

His work was often sentimental, melodramatic, and mawkish; yet in his best fiction and in his collected *Poems* (1871) he succeeded in catching the flavor of a time and place in American history whose like we shall never see again.

There are several collected editions of Bret Harte. Two of the best are *The Writings of Bret Harte*, 19 vols., 1896-1914; and *The Works of Bret Harte*, 25 vols., 1914. The best biography is George R. Stewart, Jr., *Bret Harte: Argonaut and Exile*, 1931. Good volumes of selections are *Tales of the Gold Rush*, with introduction by Oscar Lewis, 1944; and *Bret Harte: Representative Selections*, edited by Joseph B. Harrison, American Writers Series, 1941.

Important critical estimates are made by Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Development of the American Short Story*, 1923, pp. 220-244; and by Arthur H. Quinn, *American Fiction*, 1936, pp. 232-242.

### The Angelus<sup>3</sup>

(HEARD AT THE MISSION, DOLORES, 1868)

Bells of the Past, whose long-forgotten music  
Still fills the wide expanse,  
Tingeing the sober twilight of the Present  
With color of romance!

I hear your call, and see the sun descending, 5  
On rock and wave and sand,  
As down the coast the Mission voices, blending,  
Girdle the heathen land.

Within the circle of your incantation  
No blight nor mildew falls; 10  
Nor fierce unrest, nor lust, nor low ambition  
Passes those airy walls.

Borne on the swell of your long waves receding,  
I touch the farther Past;  
I see the dying glow of Spanish glory, 15  
The sunset dream and last!

Before me rise the dome-shaped Mission towers,  
The white Presidio;  
The swart commander in his leathern jerkin,  
The priest in stole of snow. 20

Once more I see Portolá's<sup>4</sup> cross uplifting  
Above the setting sun;

3. Bret Harte was inspired to write "The Angelus" upon hearing the bells of the old Spanish mission Dolores in San Francisco. Originally published in the *Overland Monthly* for October,

1868, it was collected in *Poems* (1871). The text follows the 1871 edition.

4. Don Gaspar de Portolá, Spanish governor of Lower California, discovered San Francisco Bay in 1769.

And past the headland, northward, slowly drifting  
The freighted galleon.

O solemn bells! whose consecrated masses 25  
Recall the faith of old;

O tinkling bells! that lulled with twilight music  
The spiritual fold!

Your voices break and falter in the darkness,—  
Break, falter, and are still; 30

And veiled and mystic, like the Host descending,  
The sun sinks from the hill!

1868, 1871

### The Society Upon the Stanislaus<sup>5</sup>

I reside at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful James;  
I am not up to small deceit or any sinful games;  
And I'll tell in simple language what I know about the row  
That broke up our Society<sup>6</sup> upon the Stanislaw.<sup>7</sup>

But first I would remark, that it is not a proper plan 5  
For any scientific gent to whale his fellow-man,  
And, if a member don't agree with his peculiar whim,  
To lay for that same member for to "put a head" on him.

Now nothing could be finer or more beautiful to see  
Than the first six months' proceedings of that same Society, 10  
Till Brown of Calaveras<sup>8</sup> brought a lot of fossil bones  
That he found within a tunnel near the tenement of Jones.

Then Brown he read a paper, and he reconstructed there,  
From those same bones, an animal that was extremely rare;  
And Jones then asked the Chair for a suspension of the rules, 15  
Till he could prove that those same bones was one of his lost mules.

Then Brown he smiled a bitter smile, and said he was at fault.  
It seemed he had been trespassing on Jones's family vault;  
He was a most sarcastic man, this quiet Mr. Brown,  
And on several occasions he had cleaned out the town. 20

5. First published in the *San Francisco News Letter and California Advertiser*, in 1868, as "Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences at Smith's Crossing, Tuolumne Country"; then collected in *Poems* (1871) as "The Society Upon the Stanislaus." The present text is based on the latter edition.

6. The persistent outbreak of literary and scientific societies in western mining towns and frontier outposts was a

phenomenon frequently satirized at the time. Harte here burlesques the California Academy of Natural Science, San Francisco.

7. Stanislaus Peak in northeastern California.

8. Calaveras County, east of San Francisco. Cf. Harte's story "Brown of Calaveras" (1870), and Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

Now I hold it is not decent for a scientific gent  
 To say another is an ass,—at least, to all intent;  
 Nor should the individual who happens to be meant  
 Reply by heaving rocks at him, to any great extent.

Then Abner Dean of Angel's<sup>9</sup> raised a point of order, when 25  
 A chunk of old red sandstone took him in the abdomen,  
 And he smiled a kind of sickly smile, and curled up on the floor,  
 And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

For, in less time than I write it, every member did engage  
 In a warfare with the remnants of a palæozoic age; 30  
 And the way they heaved those fossils in their anger was a sin,  
 Till the skull of an old mammoth caved the head of Thompson in.

And this is all I have to say of these improper games,  
 For I live at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful James;  
 And I've told in simple language what I know about the row 35  
 That broke up our Society upon the Stanislaw.

1868, 1871

### The Outcasts of Poker Flat<sup>4</sup>

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the 23d of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause, was another question. "I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee<sup>5</sup> had determined to rid the town of

9. Now Angels Camp, a mining town in northeastern California.

4. First published in the *Overland Monthly* for January, 1869, and collected in *The Luck of Roaring Camp*

and *Other Sketches* (1870), which the present text follows.

5. Vigilance committees were often organized in the West for the protection of life and property.

all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example, and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets of the sums he had won from them. "It's agin justice," said Jim Wheeler, "to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp—an entire stranger—carry away our money." But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept fate. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman familiarly known as "The Duchess"; another, who had won the title of "Mother Shipton"; and "Uncle Billy," a suspected sluice-robber<sup>6</sup> and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian<sup>7</sup> volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good humor characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-

6. In gold mining, the sluice was a trough or series of boxes through which gold was washed from gravel and sand.

7. The Parthians, Asians of the first

century B.C., would counterfeit wild flight from their enemies, and then wheel, catching them off guard with a quick volley.

horse, "Five-Spot," for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of "Five-Spot" with malevolence, and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar—a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants—lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day's severe travel. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foothills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of "throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveyed them.

Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "couldn't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him, at the sky ominously clouded, at the valley below, already deepen-



ing into shadow; and, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the newcomer Mr. Oakhurst recognized Tom Simson, otherwise known as "The Innocent," of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a "little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune—amounting to some forty dollars—of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door and thus addressed him: "Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. "Alone?" No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected, and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp, and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree, where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognize in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavored to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log house near the trail. "Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, "and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg,

contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire—for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast—in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive girlish fashion to the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. "Is this yer a d——d picnic?" said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine bows, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it,—snow!

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain. and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered—they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humored, freckled face; the virgin Piney slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians; and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snowflakes that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words, "Snowed in!"

A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious

fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence they might last ten days longer. "That is," said Mr. Oakhurst *sotto voce*<sup>8</sup> to the Innocent, "if you're willing to board us. If you ain't—and perhaps you'd better not—you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions." For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate's defection. "They'll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything," he added significantly, "and there's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. "We'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow'll melt, and we'll all go back together." The cheerful gayety of the young man and Mr. Oakhurst's calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine boughs, extemporized a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheeks through their professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whiskey, which he had prudently cached. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whiskey," said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm, and the group around it, that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr. Oakhurst had cached his cards with the whiskey as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "didn't say 'cards' once" during that evening. Haply the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Conventaners's<sup>9</sup> swing

8. In a low tone.

9. *I.e.*, the martial beat of the songs of the Scottish Covenanters, who militantly

supported their claim for separation from the Church of England in the seventeenth century.

to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain:

"I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,  
And I'm bound to die in His army."<sup>1</sup>

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent by saying that he had "often been a week without sleep." "Doing what?" asked Tom. "Poker!" replied Oakhurst sententiously. "When a man gets a streak of luck,—nigger-luck,<sup>2</sup>—he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler reflectively, "is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat,—you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance—

"I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,  
And I'm bound to die in His army.'"

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut,—a hopeless, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvelously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess. "Just you go out there and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing "the child," as she and the

1. Refrain of an early American spiritual, "Service of the Lord."      2. Unexpected good luck.

Duchess were pleased to call Pincy. Pincy was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she didn't swear and wasn't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering campfire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Pincy,—story-telling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope's ingenious translation of the *Iliad*. He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem—having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words—in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels,"<sup>4</sup> as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So, with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snowflakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr. Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Pincy. Only Mother Shipton—once the strongest of the party—seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side. "I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head, and open it." Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched. "Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Pincy. "You've starved yourself," said the gambler. "That's what they call it," said the woman querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

3. Achilles.

by the fact that Achilles could be wounded only in the heel.

4. The mispronunciation is reinforced

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snowshoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle. "There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days she's safe." "And you?" asked Tom Simson. "I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace. "You are not going, too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him. "As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke, but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting pines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?" "No, dear," said Piney simply. The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told, from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognized this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pinetrees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil in a firm hand:

†  
BENEATH THIS TREE  
LIES THE BODY  
OF  
JOHN OAKHURST,  
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK  
ON THE 23D OF NOVEMBER, 1850,  
AND  
HANDLED IN HIS CHECKS  
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850  
‡

And pulseless and cold, with a Derringer<sup>5</sup> by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

1869, 1870

5. A small pistol of large caliber, either single- or double-barreled.

## JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS (1848-1908)

Joel Chandler Harris made the only lasting literary record of those folk tales of American Indian and Negro origin in which the adventures of animals of the forest and field reflect the comedy of mankind. In the Uncle Remus tales he made the first dependable representation of the Negro dialects; and in his other works too, "Tree Joe and the Rest of the World," for instance, he created a regional literature of impressive reality, depth, and permanence. Harris was born near Eatonton, Georgia, on December 9, 1848, to a mother whose husband had just deserted her. He had little formal schooling, but read extensively

in Sir Thomas Browne, Addison and Steele, Shakespeare, the Bible, and especially Goldsmith. A printer in his youth, he graduated to a series of editorial positions, ultimately joining the *Atlanta Constitution*. He began to write poems and to reproduce the plantation stories learned from the Negroes, both for the *Constitution*, on which he ran a column, and as a contributor to the *Savannah Morning News*.

His first Uncle Remus story appeared in the *Constitution* in 1879. Harris soon collected a number of plantation legends, folk tales, Negro proverbs, a story of the war, and numerous "sayings"—all in the words of

Uncle Remus—in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1881). The stories were genuine, and the character of Uncle Remus—one of the most memorable in American literature—lived for the reader as an embodiment of the entire plantation life. *Nights with Uncle Remus* (1883) introduced Daddy Jake and the dialect of the coastal rice plantations of South Carolina, which was more difficult to understand. These two volumes represent Harris' best work in Negro characterization, dialect, and folklore; the first, containing the wonderful stories of the Tar Baby and the Briar Patch, has been translated into twenty-seven foreign languages. Brer Rabbit, who exhibits the tastes and thoughts of Uncle Remus himself, and Brer Bear, Brer Fox, Old Sis Cow, and the other animals, exhibit a wisdom learned in slavery; and they recall the animals of masters like Aesop and Chaucer. *Uncle Remus and His Friends* (1892), *Told by Uncle Remus* (1905), and the posthumous *Uncle Remus and the Little Boy* (1910) are further collections of the tales that Uncle Remus told the little boy, and through him, all children everywhere.

The success of Uncle Remus has obscured the achievement of Harris in his other books, such as *Free Joe and Other Georgian Sketches* (1887). Further collections of stories of the Negro, and of the life of the South in general, are *Balaam and His Master* (1891), *Tales of the Home Folks in Peace and War* (1898), and *The Chronicles of Aunt Minervy Ann* (1899). Among Harris' lesser works, two are still noteworthy: *On the Plantation* (1892), a novelette combining fiction and autobiography, and *Gabriel Tolliver* (1902), a novel, also based on events of his early life.

No standard edition of Harris' works has been published. There are many reprints of the favorite titles of the Uncle Remus series and the short stories. Miscellaneous writings were edited by Julia C. Harris, *Joel Chandler Harris: Editor and Essayist: Miscellaneous Literary, Political, and Social Writings*, 1931.

The standard biography is Julia C. Harris, *The Life and Letters of Joel Chandler Harris*, 1918. A study of Harris' early literary development is Robert L. Wiggins, *The Life of Joel Chandler Harris from Obscurity in Boyhood to Fame in Early Manhood*, 1918. A readable life is Alvin F. Harlow, *Joel Chandler Harris (Uncle Remus): Plantation Storyteller*, 1941. A scholarly appraisal is Arthur H. Quinn, *American Fiction*, 1936, pp. 374-384. The best brief critique is Thomas H. English, "In Memory of Uncle Remus," *Southern Literary Messenger*, II (February, 1940), 77-83.

## The Story of the Deluge and How It Came About.<sup>1</sup>

"One time," said Uncle Remus—adjusting his spectacles so as to be able to see how to thread a large darning-needle with which he

1. "The Story of the Deluge and How It Came About," published in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1881), is one of the legends Harris collected from the Georgia Negroes. The stories of Uncle Remus were usually genuine folklore, tales which had been brought from Africa and, in most

cases, modified in America through the influence of Indian legends and biblical stories. This story, and others told by Uncle Remus, contains social and political implications beyond the plantation world. The text is from the first edition.



was patching his coat—"one time, way back yander, 'fo' you wuz borned, honey, en 'fo' Mars John er Miss Sally wuz borned—way back yander 'fo' enny un us wuz borned, de anemils en de creeturs sorter 'lecshuncer<sup>2</sup> roun' 'mong deyselves, twel at las' dey 'greed fer ter have a 'sembly. In dem days," continued the old man, observing a look of incredulity on the little boy's face, "in dem days creeturs had lots mo' sense dan dey got now; let 'lone dat, dey had sense same like folks. Hit was tech and go wid um, too, mon, en w'en dey make up der mines w'at hatter be done, 'twant mo'n menshun'd 'fo' hit wuz done. Well, dey 'lected dat dey hatter hole er 'sembly fer ter sorter straighten out marters<sup>3</sup> en hear de complaints, en w'en de day come dey wuz on han'. De Lion, he wuz dar, kasc he wuz de king, en he hatter be dar. De Rhynossyhoss, he wuz dar, en de Elephant, he wuz dar, en de Cammils, en de Cows, en plum down ter de Crawfishes, dey wuz dar. Dey wuz all dar. En w'en de Lion shuck his mane, en tuck his seat in de big checr, den de scsshun begun fer ter commence."

"What did they do, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy.

"I can't skacely call to mine 'zackly w'at dey did do, but dey spoke speeches, en hollered, en cusst, en flung der langwidge 'roun' des like w'en yo' daddy wuz gwineter run fer de legislater en got lef'. Howsomever, dey 'ranged der 'fairs, en splained der bizness. Bimeby,<sup>4</sup> w'ile dey wuz 'sputin' 'longer one er nudder,<sup>5</sup> de Elephant trompled on one er de Crawfishes. Co'se w'en dat creetur put his foot down, w'atsumever's under dar wuz boun' fer ter be squshed, en dey wa'n't nuff er dat Crawfish lef' fer ter tell dat he'd bin dar.

"Dis make de udder Crawfishes mighty mad, en dey sorter swarmed tergedder en draw'd up a kinder peramble wid some wharfo'es<sup>6</sup> in it, en read her out in de 'sembly. But, bless grashus! sech a racket wuz a gwine on dat nobody ain't hear it, 'ceppin may be de Mud Turkle en de Spring Lizzud, en dere enfloons<sup>7</sup> wuz pow'ful lackin'.

"Bimeby, w'iles de Nunicorn wuz 'sputin' wid de Lion, en w'ile de Hyener wuz a laughin' ter hisse'f, de Elephant squshed anudder one er de Crawfishes, en a little mo'n he'd er ruinet de Mud Turkle. Den de Crawfishes, w'at dey wuz lef' un um, swarmed tergedder en draw'd up anudder peramble wid sum mo' wharfo'es; but dey might ez well er sung Ole Dan Tucker<sup>8</sup> ter a harrycane. De udder creeturs wuz too busy wid der fussin' fer ter 'spon'<sup>9</sup> unto de Crawfishes. So dar dey wuz, de Crawfishes, en dey didn't know w'at minnit wuz gwineter be de nex'; en dey kep' on gittin madder en madder en skeerder en skeerder, twel bimeby dey gun de wink ter de Mud

2. Electioneered.

3. Matters.

4. By and by.

5. Disputing one with the other.

6. Wherefores.

7. Influence.

8. A popular song about an old man who got drunk, fell in the fire, and danced about wildly with a red-hot coal in his shoe.

9. Respond.

Turkle en de Spring Lizzud, en den dey bo'd little holes in de groun' en went down outer sight."

"Who did, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy.

"De Crawfishes, honey. Dey bo'd inter de groun'<sup>1</sup> en kep' on bo'in twel dey onloost de fountains er de earf; en de waters squirt out, en riz higher en higher twel de hills wuz kivvered, en de creeturs wuz all drowneded; en all bekaze dey let on 'mong deyselves dat dey wuz bigger dan de Crawfishes."<sup>2</sup>

Then the old man blew the ashes from a smoking yam, and procceded to remove the peeling.

"Where was the ark, Uncle Remus?" the little boy inquired presently.

"W'ich ark's dat?" asked the old man, in a tone of well-feigned curiosity.<sup>3</sup>

"Noah's ark," replied the child.

"Don't you pester wid ole man Noah, honey. I boun' he tuck keer er dat ark. Dat's w'at he wuz dar fer, en dat's w'at he done. Leas' ways, dat's w'at dey tells me. But don't you bodder longer dat ark. 'ceppin' your mammy fetches it up. Dey mout er bin two deloojes. en den agin dey moutent. Ef dey wuz enny ark in dish yer w'at de Crawfishes brung on, I ain't heern tell un it, en w'en dey ain't no arks 'roun', I ain't got no time fer ter make um en put um in dar. Hit's gittin' yo' bedtime, honey."

1881

## Free Joe and the Rest of the World<sup>4</sup>

The name of Free Joe strikes humorously upon the ear of memory. It is impossible to say why, for he was the humblest, the simplest, and the most serious of all God's living creatures, sadly lacking in all those elements that suggest the humorous. It is certain, moreover, that in 1850 the sober-minded citizens of the little Georgian village of Hillsborough were not inclined to take a humorous view of Free Joe, and neither his name nor his presence provoked a smile. He was a black atom, drifting hither and thither without an owner, blown about by all the winds of circumstance.

1. The crawfish normally takes refuge by boring into the bottoms of creeks or swamps.

2. Among the African nature myths that the Negroes brought to America was a story of the flood, which subsequently became confused with the Bible story.

3. The old narrator is sensitively attempting to avoid an embarrassing issue; he knows that Noah's ark did not

figure in this African story, as it did in the Bible.

4. "Free Joe and the Rest of the World" was published in *Free Joe and Other Georgian Sketches* (1887). Harris depicts the plight of a free Negro in 1850 and the tragedy of the individual deprived of an accepted place within the existing order. The text is taken from the first edition.

and given over to shiftlessness.

The problems of one generation are the paradoxes of a succeeding one, particularly if war, or some such incident, intervenes to clarify the atmosphere and strengthen the understanding. Thus, in 1850,<sup>5</sup> Free Joe represented not only a problem of large concern, but, in the watchful eyes of Hillsborough, he was the embodiment of that vague and mysterious danger that seemed to be forever lurking on the outskirts of slavery, ready to sound a shrill and ghostly signal in the impenetrable swamps, and steal forth under the midnight stars to murder, rapine, and pillage—a danger always threatening, and yet never assuming shape; intangible, and yet real; impossible, and yet not improbable. Across the serene and smiling front of safety, the pale outlines of the awful shadow of insurrection sometimes fell. With this invisible panorama as a background, it was natural that the figure of Free Joe, simple and humble as it was, should assume undue proportions. Go where he would, do what he might, he could not escape the finger of observation and the kindling eye of suspicion. His lightest words were noted, his slightest actions marked.

Under all the circumstances it was natural that his peculiar condition should reflect itself in his habits and manners. The slaves laughed loudly day by day, but Free Joe rarely laughed. The slaves sang at their work and danced at their frolics, but no one ever heard Free Joe sing or saw him dance. There was something painfully plaintive and appealing in his attitude, something touching in his anxiety to please. He was of the friendliest nature, and seemed to be delighted when he could amuse the little children who had made a playground of the public square. At times he would please them by making his little dog Dan perform all sorts of curious tricks, or he would tell them quaint stories of the beasts of the field and birds of the air; and frequently he was coaxed into relating the story of his own freedom. That story was brief, but tragical.

In the year of our Lord 1840, when a negro speculator of a sportive turn of mind reached the little village of Hillsborough on his way to the Mississippi region, with a caravan of likely negroes of both sexes, he found much to interest him. In that day and at that time there were a number of young men in the village who had not bound themselves over to repentance for the various misdeeds of the flesh. To these young men the negro speculator (Major Frampton was his name) proceeded to address himself. He was a Virginian, he declared; and, to prove the statement, he referred all the festively inclined young men of Hillsborough to a barrel of peach-brandy in one of his covered wagons. In the minds of these young men there was less doubt in regard to the age and quality of the brandy than

5. The year 1850 was a time of great tension over slavery, accentuated by the Compromise of 1850; mob hysteria over

fugitive slaves occurred in the North, while the South lived under the threat of uprisings.

there was in regard to the negro trader's birthplace. Major Frampton might or might not have been born in the Old Dominion—that was a matter for consideration and inquiry—but there could be no question as to the mellow pungency of the peach-brandy.

In his own estimation, Major Frampton was one of the most accomplished of men. He had summered at the Virginia Springs; he had been to Philadelphia, to Washington, to Richmond, to Lynchburg, and to Charleston, and had accumulated a great deal of experience which he found useful. Hillsborough was hid in the woods of Middle Georgia, and its general aspect of innocence impressed him. He looked on the young men who had shown their readiness to test his peach-brandy as overgrown country boys who needed to be introduced to some of the arts and sciences he had at his command. Thereupon the major pitched his tents, figuratively speaking, and became, for the time being, a part and parcel of the innocence that characterized Hillsborough. A wiser man would doubtless have made the same mistake.

The little village possessed advantages that seemed to be providentially arranged to fit the various enterprises that Major Frampton had in view. There was the auction block in front of the stuccoed court-house, if he desired to dispose of a few of his negroes; there was a quarter-track, laid out to his hand and in excellent order, if he chose to enjoy the pleasures of horse-racing; there were secluded pine thickets within easy reach, if he desired to indulge in the exciting pastime of cock-fighting; and variously lonely and unoccupied rooms in the second story of the tavern, if he cared to challenge the chances of dice or cards.

Major Frampton tried them all with varying luck, until he began his famous game of poker with Judge Alfred Wellington, a stately gentleman with a flowing white beard and mild blue eyes that gave him the appearance of a benevolent patriarch. The history of the game in which Major Frampton and Judge Alfred Wellington took part is something more than a tradition in Hillsborough, for there are still living three or four men who sat around the table and watched its progress. It is said that at various stages of the game Major Frampton would destroy the cards with which they were playing, and send for a new pack, but the result was always the same. The mild blue eyes of Judge Wellington, with few exceptions, continued to overlook "hands" that were invincible—a habit they had acquired during a long and arduous course of training from Saratoga to New Orleans. Major Frampton lost his money, his horses, his wagons, and all his negroes but one, his body-servant. When his misfortune had reached this limit, the major adjourned the game. The sun was shining brightly, and all nature was cheerful. It is said that the major also seemed to be cheerful. However this may be,

he visited the court-house, and executed the papers that gave his body-servant his freedom. This being done, Major Frampton sauntered into a convenient pine thicket, and blew out his brains.

The negro thus freed came to be known as Free Joe. Compelled, under the law, to choose a guardian, he chose Judge Wellington, chiefly because his wife Lucinda was among the negroes won from Major Frampton. For several years Free Joe had what may be called a jovial time. His wife Lucinda was well provided for, and he found it a comparatively easy matter to provide for himself; so that, taking all the circumstances into consideration, it is not matter for astonishment that he became somewhat shiftless.

When Judge Wellington died, Free Joe's troubles began. The judge's negroes, including Lucinda, went to his half-brother, a man named Calderwood, who was a hard master and a rough customer generally—a man of many eccentricities of mind and character. His neighbors had a habit of alluding to him as "Old Spite"; and the name seemed to fit him so completely that he was known far and near as "Spite" Calderwood. He probably enjoyed the distinction the name gave him, at any rate he never resented it, and it was not often that he missed an opportunity to show that he deserved it. Calderwood's place was two or three miles from the village of Hillsborough, and Free Joe visited his wife twice a week, Wednesday and Saturday nights.

One Sunday he was sitting in front of Lucinda's cabin, when Calderwood happened to pass that way.

"Howdy, marster?" said Free Joe, taking off his hat.

"Who are you?" exclaimed Calderwood abruptly, halting and staring at the negro.

"I'm name' Joc, marster. I'm Lucindy's ole man."

"Who do you belong to?"

"Marse John Evans is my gyardeen, marster."

"Big name—gyardeen. Show your pass."

Free Joe produced that document, and Calderwood read it aloud slowly, as if he found it difficult to get at the meaning:

*"To whom it may concern: This is to certify that the boy Joe Frampton has my permission to visit his wife Lucinda."*

This was dated at Hillsborough, and signed "*John W. Evans.*"

Calderwood read it twice, and then looked at Free Joe, elevating his eyebrows, and showing his discolored teeth.

"Some mighty big words in that there. Evans owns this place, I reckon. When's he comin' down to take hold?"

Free Joe fumbled with his hat. He was badly frightened.

"Lucindy say she speck you wouldn't min' my comin', long ez I behave, marster."

Calderwood tore the pass in pieces and flung it away.

"Don't want no free niggers 'round here," he exclaimed. "There's the big road. It'll carry you to town. Don't let me catch you here no more. Now, mind what I tell you."

Free Joe presented a shabby spectacle as he moved off with his little dog Dan slinking at his heels. It should be said in behalf of Dan, however, that his bristles were up, and that he looked back and growled. It may be that the dog had the advantage of insignificance, but it is difficult to conceive how a dog bold enough to raise his bristles under Calderwood's very eyes could be as insignificant as Free Joe. But both the negro and his little dog seemed to give a new and more dismal aspect to forlornness as they turned into the road and went toward Hillsborough.

After this incident Free Joe appeared to have clearer ideas concerning his peculiar condition. He realized the fact that though he was free he was more helpless than any slave. Having no owner, every man was his master. He knew that he was the object of suspicion, and therefore all his slender resources (ah! how pitifully slender they were!) were devoted to winning, not kindness and appreciation, but toleration; all his efforts were in the direction of mitigating the circumstances that tended to make his condition so much worse than that of the negroes around him—negroes who had friends because they had masters.

So far as his own race was concerned, Free Joe was an exile. If the slaves secretly envied him his freedom (which is to be doubted, considering his miserable condition), they openly despised him, and lost no opportunity to treat him with contumely. Perhaps this was in some measure the result of the attitude which Free Joe chose to maintain toward them. No doubt his instinct taught him that to hold himself aloof from the slaves would be to invite from the whites the toleration which he coveted, and without which even his miserable condition would be rendered more miserable still.

His greatest trouble was the fact that he was not allowed to visit his wife; but he soon found a way out of his difficulty. After he had been ordered away from the Calderwood place, he was in the habit of wandering as far in that direction as prudence would permit. Near the Calderwood place, but not on Calderwood's land, lived an old man named Micajah Staley and his sister Becky Staley. These people were old and very poor. Old Micajah had a palsied arm and hand; but, in spite of this, he managed to earn a precarious living with his turning-lathe.

When he was a slave Free Joe would have scorned these representatives of a class known as poor white trash, but now he found them sympathetic and helpful in various ways. From the back door of their cabin he could hear the Calderwood negroes singing at night, and he sometimes fancied he could distinguish Lucinda's shrill

treble rising above the other voices. A large poplar grew in the woods some distance from the Stacey cabin, and at the foot of this tree Free Joe would sit for hours with his face turned toward Calderwood's. His little dog Dan would curl up in the leaves near by, and the two seemed to be as comfortable as possible.

One Saturday afternoon Free Joe, sitting at the foot of this friendly poplar, fell asleep. How long he slept, he could not tell; but when he awoke little Dan was licking his face, the moon was shining brightly, and Lucinda his wife stood before him laughing. The dog, seeing that Free Joe was asleep, had grown somewhat impatient, and he concluded to make an excursion to the Calderwood place on his own account. Lucinda was inclined to give the incident a twist in the direction of superstition.

"I 'uz settn' down front er de fireplace," she said, "cookin' me some meat, w'en all of a sudden I year<sup>6</sup> sumpin at de do'—scratch, scratch. I tuck'n tu'n de meat over, en make out I ain't year it. Bimeby it come dar 'gin—scratch, scratch. I up en open de do', I did, en, bless de Lord! dar wuz little Dan, en it look like ter me dat his ribs done grow terge'er. I gin 'im some bread, en den, w'en he start out, I tuck'n foller 'im, kaze,<sup>7</sup> I say ter myse'f, maybe my nigger man mought be some'rs 'roun'. Dat ar little dog got sense, mon."

Free Joe laughed and dropped his hand lightly on Dan's head. For a long time after that he had no difficulty in seeing his wife. He had only to sit by the poplar tree until little Dan could run and fetch her. But after a while the other negroes discovered that Lucinda was meeting Free Joe in the woods, and information of the fact soon reached Calderwood's ears. Calderwood was what is called a man of action. He said nothing; but one day he put Lucinda in his buggy, and carried her to Macon, sixty miles way. He carried her to Macon, and came back without her; and nobody in or around Hillsborough, or in that section, ever saw her again.

For many a night after that Free Joe sat in the woods and waited. Little Dan would run merrily off and be gone a long time, but he always came back without Lucinda. This happened over and over again. The "willis-whistlers"<sup>8</sup> would call and call, like fantom huntsmen wandering on a far-off shore; the screech-owl would shake and shiver in the depths of the woods; the night-hawks, sweeping by on noiseless wings, would snap their beaks as though they enjoyed the huge joke of which Free Joe and little Dan were the victims; and the whip-poor-wills would cry to each other through the gloom. Each night seemed to be lonelier than the preceding, but Free Joe's patience was proof against loneliness. There came a time, however, when little Dan refused to go after Lucinda. When Free Joe

6. Hear.

7. Because.

8. Probably the willet, a shore bird with a loud, shrill whistle.

motioned him in the direction of the Calderwood place, he would simply move about unceasingly and whine; then he would curl up in the leaves and make himself comfortable.

One night, instead of going to the poplar tree to wait for Lucinda, Free Joe went to the Staley cabin, and, in order to make his welcome good, as he expressed it, he carried with him an armful of fat-pine splinters. Miss Becky Staley had a great reputation in those parts as a fortune-teller, and the schoolgirls, as well as older people, often tested her powers in this direction, some in jest and some in earnest. Free Joe placed his humble offering of light-wood in the chimney corner, and then seated himself on the steps, dropping his hat on the ground outside.

"Miss Becky," he said presently, "whar in de name er gracious you reckon Lucindy is?"

"Well, the Lord he'p the nigger!" exclaimed Miss Becky, in a tone that seemed to reproduce, by some curious agreement of sight with sound, her general aspect of peakedness. "Well, the Lord he'p the nigger! hain't you been a-seein' her all this blessed time? She's over at old Spite Calderwood's, if she's anywheres, I reckon."

"No'm, dat I ain't, Miss Becky. I ain't seen Lucindy in now gwine on mighty nigh a mont'."

"Well, it hain't a-gwine to hurt you," said Miss Becky, somewhat sharply. "In my day an' time it wuz allers took to be a bad sign when niggers got to honeyin' 'roun' an' gwine on."

"Yessum," said Free Joe, cheerfully assenting to the proposition—"yessum, dat's so, but me an' my ole 'oman, we 'uz raise terge'er, en dey ain't bin many days w'en we 'uz' way fum one 'n'er like we is now."

"Maybe she's up an' took up wi' some un else," said Micajah Staley from the corner. "You know what the sayin' is: 'New master, new nigger.'"

"Dat's so, dat's de sayin', but tain't wid my ole 'oman like 'tis wid yuther niggers. Me en her wuz des natally raise up terge'er. Dey's lots likelier niggers dan w'at I is," said Free Joe, viewing his shabbiness with a critical eye, "but I knows Lucindy mos' good ez I does little Dan dar—dat I does."

There was no reply to this, and Free Joe continued:

"Miss Becky, I wish you please, ma'am, take en run yo' kyards<sup>9</sup> en see sump'n n'er 'bout Lucindy; kaze ef she sick, I'm gwine dar. Dey ken take en take me up en gimme a stroppin', but I'm gwine dar."

Miss Becky got her cards, but first she picked up a cup, in the bottom of which were some coffee-grounds. These she whirled slowly round and round, ending finally by turning the cup upside down



on the hearth and allowing it to remain in that position.

"I'll turn the cup first," said Miss Becky, "and then I'll run the cards and see what they say."

As she shuffled the cards the fire on the hearth burned low, and in its fitful light the gray-haired, thin-featured woman seemed to deserve the weird reputation which rumor and gossip had given her. She shuffled the cards for some moments, gazing intently in the dying fire; then, throwing a piece of pine on the coals, she made three divisions of the pack, disposing them about in her lap. Then she took the first pile, ran the cards slowly through her fingers, and studied them carefully. To the first she added the second pile. The study of these was evidently not satisfactory. She said nothing, but frowned heavily; and the frown deepened as she added the rest of the cards until the entire fifty-two had passed in review before her. Though she frowned, she seemed to be deeply interested. Without changing the relative position of the cards, she ran them all over again. Then she threw a larger piece of pine on the fire, shuffled the cards afresh, divided them into three piles, and subjected them to the same careful and critical examination.

"I can't tell the day when I've seed the cards run this a-way," she said after a while. "What is an' what ain't, I'll never tell you; but I know what the cards sez."

"W'at does dey say, Miss Becky?" the negro inquired, in a tone the solemnity of which was heightened by its eagerness.

"They er runnin' quare. These here that I'm a-lookin' at," said Miss Becky, "they stan' for the past. Them there, they er the present; and the t'others, they er the future. Here's a bundle"—tapping the ace of clubs with her thumb—"an' here's a journey as plain as the nose on a man's face. Here's Lucinda—"

"Whar she, Miss Becky?"

"Here she is—the queen of spades."

Free Joe grinned. The idea seemed to please him immensely.

"Well, well, well!" he exclaimed. "Ef dat don't beat my time! De queen er spades! W'en Lucindy year dat hit'll tickle 'er, sho'l"

Miss Becky continued to run the cards back and forth through her fingers.

"Here's a bundle an' a journey, and here's Lucinda. An' here's ole Spite Calderwood."

She held the cards toward the negro and touched the king of clubs.

"De Lord he'p my soull" exclaimed Free Joe with a chuckle. "De faver's<sup>1</sup> dar. Yesser, dat's him! W'at de matter 'long wid all un um, Miss Becky?"

The old woman added the second pile of cards to the first, and

1. Favor; *i.e.*, "resemblance."

then the third, still running them through her fingers slowly and critically. By this time the piece of pine in the fireplace had wrapped itself in a mantle of flame, illuminating the cabin and throwing into strange relief the figure of Miss Becky as she sat studying the cards. She frowned ominously at the cards and mumbled a few words to herself. Then she dropped her hands in her lap and gazed once more into the fire. Her shadow danced and capered on the wall and floor behind her, as if, looking over her shoulder into the future, it could behold a rare spectacle. After a while she picked up the cup that had been turned on the hearth. The coffee grounds, shaken around, presented what seemed to be a most intricate map.

"Here's the journey," said Miss Becky, presently; "here's the big road, here's rivers to cross, here's the bundle to tote." She paused and sighed. "They hain't no names writ here, an' what it all means I'll never tell you. Cajy, I wish you'd be so good as to han' me my pipe."

"I hain't no hand wi' the kyards," said Cajy, as he handed the pipe, "but I reckon I can patch out your misinformation, Becky, bekaze the other day, whiles I was a-finishin' up Mizzers Perdue's rollin'-pin, I hearn a rattlin' in the road. I looked out, an' Spite Calderwood was a-drivin' by in his buggy, an' thar sot Lucinda by him. It'd in-about drapt out er my min'."

Free Joe sat on the door-sill and fumbled at his hat, flinging it from one hand to the other.

"You ain't see um gwine back, is you, Mars Cajy?" he asked after a while.

"Ef they went back by this road," said Mr. Staley, with the air of one who is accustomed to weigh well his words, "it must 'a' bin endurin' of the time whiles I was asleep, bekaze I hain't bin no funder from my shop than to yon bed."

"Well, sir!" exclaimed Free Joe in an awed tone, which Mr. Staley seemed to regard as a tribute to his extraordinary powers of statement.

"Ef it's my beliefs you want," continued the old man, "I'll pitch 'em at you fair and free. My beliefs is that Spite Calderwood is gone an' took Lucindy outen the county. Bless your heart and soul! when Spite Calderwood meets the Old Boy<sup>2</sup> in the road they'll be a turrible scuffle. You mark what I tell you."

Free Joe, still fumbling with his hat, rose and leaned against the door-facing. He seemed to be embarrassed. Presently he said:

"I speck I better be gittin' 'long. Nex' time I see Lucindy, I'm gwine tell 'er w'at Miss Becky say 'bout de queen er spades—dat I is. Ef dat don't tickle 'er, dey ain't no nigger 'oman never bin tickle'."

He paused a moment, as though waiting for some remark or comment, some confirmation of misfortune, or, at the very least, some endorsement of his suggestion that Lucinda would be greatly pleased to know that she had figured as the queen of spades; but neither Miss Becky nor her brother said anything.

"One minnit ridin' in the buggy 'longside er Mars Spite, en de nex' highfalutin' 'roun' playin' de qucen er spades. Mon, deze yer nigger gals gittin' up in de pictur's; dey sholy is."

With a brief "Good night, Miss Becky, Mars Cajy," Free Joe went out into the darkness, followed by little Dan. He made his way to the poplar, where Lucinda had been in the habit of meeting him, and sat down. He sat there a long time; he sat there until little Dan, growing restless, trotted off in the direction of the Calderwood place. Dozing against the poplar, in the gray dawn of the morning, Free Joe heard Spite Calderwood's fox-hounds in full cry a mile away.

"Shoo!" he exclaimed, scratching his head, and laughing to himself, "dem ar dogs is des a-warmin' dat old fox up."

But it was Dan the hounds were after, and the little dog came back no more. Free Joe waited and waited, until he grew tired of waiting. He went back the next night and waited, and for many nights thereafter. His waiting was in vain, and yet he never regarded it as in vain. Careless and shabby as he was, Free Joe was thoughtful enough to have his theory. He was convinced that little Dan had found Lucinda, and that some night when the moon was shining brightly through the trees, the dog would rouse him from his dreams as he sat sleeping at the foot of the poplar tree, and he would open his eyes and behold Lucinda standing over him, laughing merrily as of old; and then he thought what fun they would have about the queen of spades.

How many long nights Free Joe waited at the foot of the poplar tree for Lucinda and little Dan no one can ever know. He kept no account of them, and they were not recorded by Micajah Staley nor by Miss Becky. The season ran into summer and then into fall. One night he went to the Staley cabin, cut the two old people an armful of wood, and seated himself on the doorsteps, where he rested. He was always thankful—and proud, as it seemed—when Miss Becky gave him a cup of coffee, which she was sometimes thoughtful enough to do. He was especially thankful on this particular night.

"You er still layin' off for to strike up wi' Lucindy out thar in the woods, I reckon," said Micajah Staley, smiling grimly. The situation was not without its humorous aspects.

"Oh, dey er comin', Mars Cajy, dey er comin', sho," Free Joe replied. "I boun' you dey'll come; en w'en dey does come, I'll des take en fetch um yer, whar you kin see um wid you own eyes, you

en Miss Becky."

"No," said Mr. Staley, with a quick and emphatic gesture of disapproval. "Don't! don't fetch 'em anywheres. Stay right wi' 'em as long as may be."

Free Joe chuck'ed, and slipped away into the night, while the two old people sat gazing in the fire. Finally Micajah spoke.

"Look at that nigger; look at 'im. He's pine-blank as happy now as a kildee by a mill-race. You can't faze 'em. I'd in-about give up my t'other hand ef I could stan' flat-footed, an' grin at trouble like that there nigger."

"Niggers is niggers," said Miss Becky, smiling grimly, "an' you can't rub it out; yit I lay I've seed a heap of white people lots meaner'n Free Joe. He grins—an' that's nigger—but I've ketched his under jaw a-tremblin' when Lucindy's name uz brung up. An' I tell you," she went on, bridling up a little, and speaking with almost fierce emphasis, "the Old Boy's done sharpened his claws for Spite Calderwood. You'll see it."

"Me, Rebecca?" said Mr. Staley, hugging his palsied arm; "me? I hope not."

"Well, you'll know it then," said Miss Becky, laughing heartily at her brother's look of alarm.

The next morning Micajah Staley had occasion to go into the woods after a piece of timber. He saw Free Joe sitting at the foot of the poplar, and the sight vexed him somewhat.

"Git up from there," he cried, "an' go an' arn your livin'. A mighty purty pass it's come to, when great big buck niggers can lie a-snorin' in the woods all day, when t'other folks is got to be up an' a-gwine.<sup>8</sup> Git up from there!"

Receiving no response, Mr. Staley went to Free Joe, and shook him by the shoulder; but the negro made no response. He was dead. His hat was off, his head was bent, and a smile was on his face. It was as if he had bowed and smiled when death stood before him, humble to the last. His clothes were ragged; his hands were rough and callous; his shoes were literally tied together with strings; he was shabby in the extreme. A passer-by, glancing at him, could have no idea that such a humble creature had been summoned as a witness before the Lord God of Hosts.



# Masters of Critical Realism

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WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

(1837-1920)

At the height of his career, about 1890, Howells was firmly established in serious literary opinion as the foremost man of letters of his generation in America. Today both Mark Twain and Henry James are considered greater authors than Howells. Yet his best writing is marked by truth and power; he is large both in the scope of his themes and in the volume of his output. Perhaps ten of his novels have held their appeal, and three—*A Modern Instance*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, and *Indian Summer*—are familiar classics of American fiction. He revitalized the realism of the day and opposed the prevalent sentimentality and idealization. As a critic he enthusiastically supported such younger radicals as Hamlin Garland and Stephen Crane, Frank Norris and the “questionable” dramatic realist, James A. Herne. He helped to establish the literary respectability in the East of that wild son of Missouri, Mark Twain. His criticism exerted a strong influence on his age. In his plays as in his fiction he advanced the comic criticism of society, and broadened it to

include the international contrast of manners. He wrote a number of notable books of travel, and his autobiographical sketches are distinguished.

From boyhood William Dean Howells smelled of printer's ink and manifested the instincts of the journalist. He was born on March 1, 1837, at Martin's Ferry, Ohio. His father, a country printer and newspaper publisher of roving disposition and literary inclinations, moved when the boy was three to Hamilton, twenty miles from Cincinnati, where he edited the Whig paper. There, by the age of nine, young Howells was setting type in his father's shop and listening to his Swedenborgian mysticism and literary idealism. His formal schooling was negligible, but he read unceasingly, and his natural gifts were such that at twenty-nine he became the assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*; in his forties he was offered, and declined, professorships at Johns Hopkins and Harvard. In *A Boy's Town* (1890), Howells recorded his early adventures. When the boy was twelve his father bought an ill-fated news-

paper at Dayton; the next year they moved to the Little Miami River, where they experienced the primitive life described in *My Year in a Log Cabin* (1893). After several moves with the family paper, Howells struck out at nineteen as a newspaperman in Cincinnati and in Columbus, where he became editor of the *Ohio State Journal*; meanwhile his mammoth appetite for books led him deep into the literature reflected in *My Literary Passions* (1895). With a fellow journalist, John J. Piatt, he composed *Poems of Two Friends* (1860); the same year his biography of the Republican presidential candidate, Lincoln, provided him with funds for his long-awaited literary pilgrimage to the East, where he met Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Whitman, as recounted in *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* (1900).

The Lincoln biography also won the young journalist an appointment as consul to Venice (1861-1865), and provided four years of relative leisure. He gathered material for such early travel books as *Venetian Life* (1866) and *Italian Journeys* (1867), and for the Italian scenes of three of his minor novels. In 1865 he returned to Boston to join the editorial staff of the *Nation*. Within the year he was assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, whose first editor, James Russell Lowell, had nine years earlier launched it with the distinction that Howells later maintained as editor, between 1871 and 1881. During this busy decade Howells

published six novels; his seventh, *A Modern Instance* (1882), although it is imperfect in construction, represents the first perfection of his characteristic quality. In portraying the disintegration of Bartley Hubbard's career and marriage, Howells for the first time fully demonstrated a realism that was primarily concerned, not with praise or blame, but with observing in human destinies the natural consequences of character.

Leaving the *Atlantic*, Howells spent four years abroad (1881-1885) in travel and study, and in 1885 published his best-known work, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. In this novel of Boston life Howells contrasts the Corys of Beacon Hill with the Laphams, whose enterprising development of a paint factory on their Vermont farm has led to the founding of a Boston industry and a new fortune. Silas Lapham, who comes to terms with himself at the cost of his fortune, is a character not soon forgotten.

After 1886 Howells was closely associated with *Harper's Magazine*. In his column, "The Editor's Study," appeared much of his criticism of fiction, collected in 1891 as *Criticism and Fiction*. After 1900 he was the familiar essayist of "The Easy Chair," in which his *obiter dicta* became widely familiar. During this New York period he was captivated by Tolstoi, whose Christian socialism motivated several of his novels, of which *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) and *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894), a utopian

novel, are the best known. Among his novels of manners of this period, his masterpiece is *Indian Summer* (1886), a story of the second blooming of love in middle life. Charming, witty, and mature, it represents his best use of the Italian scene.

The close student of the period may take issue with Howells' contention that "the smiling aspects" of American life were the most prevalent and the most typical, and that American life was such that the novelist could confine himself to what would not offend the innocence of a young girl, and should therefore do so. But Howells perceptively explored the areas to which he limited himself, and within those limits his characters and their dialogue frequently attain a high degree of subtlety. In the psychological study of character and in his fascination with the dark or profound recesses of the human consciousness he acknowledged the inspiration of Hawthorne. The results in his writing, however, are independent of Hawthorne in both method and motivation. The best of his fiction stems from his analysis of character in social situations, from his abiding sense of the responsibility that people have for each other, and from his deft and witty revelation of the motives of men and women. Yet this high ability was increasingly diluted by his fictional propaganda for social and economic

improvement. In addition he wrote too much, and sometimes for an immediate public—more than thirty novels or novelettes, several volumes of short stories, and thirty-one dramas (chiefly one-act social comedies), as well as the sketches and travels. The best of his fiction, that dealing with character, like much of his autobiographical writing, continues to appeal with the freshness and power that belong to a master of literature.

There is no collected edition of Howells. Many editions of *The Rise of Silas Lapham* exist, and *Indian Summer* and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* have been reprinted. Henry Steele Commager edited *Selected Writings of William Dean Howells*, 1950, containing *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, *A Modern Instance*, *A Boy's Town*, and *My Mark Twain*. W. J. Meserve edited *Complete Plays of W. D. Howells*, 1960. O. W. Firkins wrote a critical biography, *William Dean Howells: A Study*, 1924. Mildred Howells edited *Life in Letters of William Dean Howells*, 2 vols., 1928. An indispensable study is the introduction by Clara and Rudolph Kirk to *William Dean Howells: Representative Selections*, American Writers Series, 1950. A large-scale critical study is Everett Carter, *Howells and the Age of Realism*, 1954. Edwin H. Cady, *The Road to Realism*, 1956, and *The Realist at War*, 1958, comprise studies of 1837–1885 and 1885–1920. Recent evaluations are Van Wyck Brooks, *Howells: His Life and Work*, 1959; R. L. Hough, *Quiet Rebel*, 1959; and George N. Bennett, *William Dean Howells: The Development of a Novelist*, 1959. Howells' autobiographical reminiscences will be found in *A Boy's Town*, 1890; *My Year in a Log Cabin*, 1893; *My Literary Passions*, 1895; *Impressions and Experiences*, 1896; *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*, 1900; and *Years of My Youth*, 1916.

## From Criticism and Fiction

[*The Smiling Aspects of Life*]<sup>1</sup>

It is the difference of the American novelist's ideals from those of the English novelist that gives him his advantage, and seems to promise him the future. The love of the passionate and the heroic, as the Englishman has it, is such a crude and unwholesome thing, so deaf and blind to all the most delicate and important facts of art and life, so insensible to the subtle values in either that its presence or absence makes the whole difference, and enables one who is not obsessed by it to thank Heaven that he is not as that other man is.

There can be little question that many refinements of thought and spirit which every American is sensible of in the fiction of this continent, are necessarily lost upon our good kin beyond seas, whose thumb-fingered apprehension requires something gross and palpable for its assurance of reality. This is not their fault, and I am not sure that it is wholly their misfortune: they are made so as not to miss what they do not find, and they are simply content without those subtleties of life and character which it gives us so keen a pleasure to have noted in literature. If they perceive them at all it is as something vague and diaphanous, something that flimsily wavers before their sense and teases them, much as the beings of an invisible world might mock one of our material frame by intimations of their presence. It is with reason, therefore, on the part of an Englishman, that Mr. Henley<sup>2</sup> complains of our fiction as a shadow-land, though we find more and more in it the faithful report of our life, its motives and emotions, and all the comparatively etherealized passions and ideals that influence it.

In fact, the American who chooses to enjoy his birthright to the full, lives in a world wholly different from the Englishman's, and speaks (too often through his nose) another language: he breathes a rarefied and nimble air full of shining possibilities and radiant promises which the fog-and-soot-clogged lungs of those less-favored islanders struggle in vain to fill themselves with. But he ought to be modest in his advantage, and patient with the coughing and sputtering of his cousin who complains of finding himself in an exhausted receiver on plunging into one of our novels. To be quite just to the poor fellow, I have had some such experience as that myself in the atmosphere of some of our more attenuated romances.

Yet every now and then I read a book with perfect comfort and much exhilaration, whose scenes the average Englishman would gasp in. Nothing happens; that is, nobody murders or debauches

1. This selection was first printed in *Harper's* in slightly different form, the final part appearing in September, 1886, and the first in October, 1890. It was incorporated into Chapter XXI of

*Criticism and Fiction* (1891), which the present text follows.

2. William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), English poet, critic, and editor.



anybody else; there is no arson or pillage of any sort; there is not a ghost, or a ravening beast, or a hair-breadth escape, or a shipwreck, or a monster of self-sacrifice, or a lady five thousand years old in the whole course of the story; "no promenade, no band of music, nossing!" as Mr. Du Maurier's<sup>3</sup> Frenchman said of the meet for a fox-hunt. Yet it is all alive with the keenest interest for those who enjoy the study of individual traits and general conditions as they make themselves known to American experience.

These conditions have been so favorable hitherto (though they are becoming always less so) that they easily account for the optimistic faith of our novel which Mr. Hughes<sup>4</sup> notices. It used to be one of the disadvantages of the practice of romance in America, which Hawthorne more or less whimsically lamented, that there were so few shadows and inequalities in our broad level of prosperity; and it is one of the reflections suggested by Dostoevsky's<sup>5</sup> novel, *The Crime and the Punishment*, that whoever struck a note so profoundly tragic in American fiction would do a false and mistaken thing—as false and as mistaken in its way as dealing in American fiction with certain nudities which the Latin peoples seem to find edifying. Whatever their deserts, very few American novelists have been led out to be shot, or finally exiled to the rigors of a winter at Duluth;<sup>6</sup> and in a land where journeymen carpenters and plumbers strike for four dollars a day the sum of hunger and cold is comparatively small, and the wrong from class to class has been almost inappreciable, though all this is changing for the worse. Our novelists, therefore, concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American, and seek the universal in the individual rather than the social interests. It is worth while, even at the risk of being called commonplace, to be true to our well-to-do actualities; the very passions themselves seem to be softened and modified by conditions which formerly at least could not be said to wrong any one, to cramp endeavor, or to cross lawful desire. Sin and suffering and shame there must always be in the world, I suppose, but I believe that in this new world of ours it is still mainly from one to another one, and oftener still from one to one's self. We have death too in America, and a great deal of disagreeable and painful disease, which the multiplicity of our patent medicines does not seem to cure; but this is tragedy that comes in the very nature of things, and is not peculiarly American, as the large, cheerful average of health and success and happy life is. It will not do to boast, but it is well to be true to the facts, and to see that, apart from

3. George du Maurier (1834–1896), English author born in Paris, best known as the author of the popular novel *Trilby* (1894).

4. An English journalist, E. Hughes, who had commented on the differences between English and American novels.

5. Fëdor Dostoevski (1821–1881), great Russian novelist whose work Howells helped introduce to American readers.

6. Dostoevski himself was exiled to the Siberian mines.

these purely mortal troubles, the race here has enjoyed conditions in which most of the ills that have darkened its annals might be averted by honest work and unselfish behavior.

1886-1890, 1891

[*Decency Is True to Life*]<sup>7</sup>

The fact [is] generally lost sight of by those who censure the Anglo-Saxon novel for its prudishness, that it is really not such a prude after all; and that if it is sometimes apparently anxious to avoid those experiences of life not spoken of before young people, this may be an appearance only. Sometimes a novel which has this shuffling air, this effect of truckling to propriety, might defend itself, if it could speak for itself, by saying that such experiences happened not to come within its scheme, and that, so far from maiming or mutilating itself in ignoring them, it was all the more faithfully representative of the tone of modern life in dealing with love that was chaste, and with passion so honest that it could be openly spoken of before the tenderest society bud at dinner. It might say that the guilty intrigue, the betrayal, the extreme flirtation even, was the exceptional thing in life, and unless the scheme of the story necessarily involved it, that it would be bad art to lug it in, and as bad taste as to introduce such topics in a mixed company. It could say very justly that the novel in our civilization now always addresses a mixed company, and that the vast majority of the company are ladies, and that very many, if not most, of these ladies are young girls. If the novel were written for men and for married women alone, as in continental Europe, it might be altogether different. But the simple fact is that it is not written for them alone among us, and it is a question of writing, under cover of our universal acceptance, things for young girls to read which you would be put out-of-doors for saying to them, or of frankly giving notice of your intention, and so cutting yourself off from the pleasure—and it is a very high and sweet one—of appealing to these vivid, responsive intelligences, which are none the less brilliant and admirable because they are innocent.

One day a novelist who liked, after the manner of other men, to repine at his hard fate, complained to his friend, a critic, that he was tired of the restriction he had put upon himself in this regard; for it is a mistake, as can be readily shown, to suppose that others impose it. "See how free those French fellows are!" he rebelled. "Shall we always be shut up to our tradition of decency?"

"Do you think it's much worse than being shut up to their tradition of indecency?" said his friend. \* \* \*

7. This passage is taken from an essay in *Harper's* for June, 1889, which later became Chapter XXIV of *Criticism and*

*Fiction* (1891), the source of the present text.

But I do not mean to imply that his case covers the whole ground. So far as it goes, though, it ought to stop the mouths of those who complain that fiction is enslaved to propriety among us. It appears that of a certain kind of impropriety it is free to give us all it will, and more. But this is not what serious men and women writing fiction mean when they rebel against the limitations of their art in our civilization. They have no desire to deal with nakedness, as painters and sculptors freely do in the worship of beauty; or with certain facts of life, as the stage does, in the service of sensation. But they ask why, when the conventions of the plastic and histrionic arts liberate their followers to the portrayal of almost any phase of the physical or of the emotional nature, an American novelist may not write a story on the lines of *Anna Karenina* or *Madame Bovary*.<sup>8</sup> They wish to touch one of the most serious and sorrowful problems of life in the spirit of Tolstoy and Flaubert, and they ask why they may not. At one time, they remind us, the Anglo-Saxon novelist did deal with such problems—De Foe in his spirit, Richardson in his, Goldsmith in his.<sup>9</sup> At what moment did our fiction lose this privilege? In what fatal hour did the Young Girl arise and seal the lips of Fiction, with a touch of her finger, to some of the most vital interests of life?

Whether I wished to oppose them in their aspirations for greater freedom, or whether I wished to encourage them, I should begin to answer them by saying that the Young Girl has never done anything of the kind. The manners of the novel have been improving with those of its readers; that is all. Gentlemen no longer swear or fall drunk under the table, or abduct young ladies and shut them up in lonely country-houses, or so habitually set about the ruin of their neighbors' wives, as they once did. Generally, people now call a spade an agricultural implement; they have not grown decent without having also grown a little squeamish, but they have grown comparatively decent; there is no doubt about that. They require of a novelist whom they respect unquestionable proof of his seriousness, if he proposes to deal with certain phases of life; they require a sort of scientific decorum. He can no longer expect to be received on the ground of entertainment only; he assumes a higher function, something like that of a physician or a priest, and they expect him to be bound by laws as sacred as those of such professions; they hold him solemnly pledged not to betray them or abuse their confidence. If he will accept the conditions, they give him their confidence, and

8. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* details the sordid plight of a weak woman lost in desolate love affairs; Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* traces the tragedy of an illicit love which leads to death.

9. Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) treated illicit passion in *Moll Flanders* and

*Roxana*; Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) wrote *Clarissa Harlowe*, in which the heroine dies of shame; and Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774) dealt with seduction and desertion in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

he may then treat to his greater honor, and not at all to his disadvantage, of such experiences, such relations of men and women as George Eliot treats in *Adam Bede*, in *Daniel Deronda*, in *Romola*, in almost all her books; such as Hawthorne treats in *The Scarlet Letter*; such as Dickens treats in *David Copperfield*; such as Thackeray treats in *Pendennis*, and glances at in every one of his fictions; such as most of the masters of English fiction have at some time treated more or less openly. It is quite false or quite mistaken to suppose that our novels have left untouched these most important realities of life. They have only not made them their stock in trade; they have kept a true perspective in regard to them; they have relegated them in their pictures of life to the space and place they occupy in life itself, as we know it in England and America. They have kept a correct proportion, knowing perfectly well that unless the novel is to be a map, with everything scrupulously laid down in it, a faithful record of life in far the greater extent could be made to the exclusion of guilty love and all its circumstances and consequences.

I justify them in this view not only because I hate what is cheap and meretricious, and hold in peculiar loathing the cant of the critics who require "passion" as something in itself admirable and desirable in a novel, but because I prize fidelity in the historian of feeling and character. Most of these critics who demand "passion" would seem to have no conception of any passion but one. Yet there are several other passions: the passion of grief, the passion of avarice, the passion of pity, the passion of ambition, the passion of hate, the passion of envy, the passion of devotion, the passion of friendship; and all these have a greater part in the drama of life than the passion of love, and infinitely greater than the passion of guilty love. Wittingly or unwittingly, English fiction and American fiction have recognized this truth, not fully, not in the measure it merits, but in greater degree than most other fiction.

1889, 1891

## Editha<sup>1</sup>

The air was thick with the war feeling, like the electricity of a storm which has not yet burst. Editha sat looking out into the hot spring afternoon, with her lips parted, and panting with the in-

1. "Editha," like Howells' most successful novels, combines a human situation with a concrete social or moral problem—in this case the problem of war—and he supports his social purpose without sacrificing the reality of his characters.

The war in the story resembles the brief Spanish-American engagement of 1898. "Editha" was first published in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in January, 1905, collected in *Between the Dark and the Daylight* (1907).

tensity of the question whether she could let him go. She had decided that she could not let him stay, when she saw him at the end of the still leafless avenue, making slowly up toward the house, with his head down, and his figure relaxed. She ran impatiently out on the veranda, to the edge of the steps, and imperatively demanded greater haste of him with her will before she called aloud to him, "George!"

He had quickened his pace in mystical response to her mystical urgency, before he could have heard her; now he looked up and answered "Well?"

"Oh, how united we are!" she exulted, and then she swooped down the steps to him. "What is it?" she cried.

"It's war," he said, and he pulled her up to him, and kissed her.

She kissed him back intensely, but irrelevantly, as to their passion, and uttered from deep in her throat, "How glorious!"

"It's war," he repeated, without consenting to her sense of it; and she did not know just what to think at first. She never knew what to think of him; that made his mystery, his charm. All through their courtship, which was contemporaneous with the growth of the war feeling, she had been puzzled by his want of seriousness about it. He seemed to despise it even more than he abhorred it. She could have understood his abhorring any sort of bloodshed; that would have been a survival of his old life when he thought he would be a minister, and before he changed and took up the law. But making light of a cause so high and noble seemed to show a want of earnestness at the core of his being. Not but that she felt herself able to cope with a congenital defect of that sort, and make his love for her save him from himself. Now perhaps the miracle was already wrought in him. In the presence of the tremendous fact that he announced, all triviality seemed to have gone out of him; she began to feel that. He sank down on the top step, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, while she poured out upon him her question of the origin and authenticity of his news.

All the while, in her duplex emotioning, she was aware that now at the very beginning she must put a guard upon herself against urging him, by any word or act, to take the part that her whole soul willed him to take, for the completion of her ideal of him. He was very nearly perfect as he was, and he must be allowed to perfect himself. But he was peculiar, and he might very well be reasoned out of his peculiarity. Before her reasoning went her emotioning: her nature pulling upon his nature, her womanhood upon his manhood, without her knowing the means she was using to the end she was willing. She had always supposed that the man who won her would have done something to win her; she did not know what, but something. George Gearson had simply asked her

for her love, on the way home from a concert, and she gave her love to him, without, as it were, thinking. But now, it flashed upon her, if he could do something worthy to *have* won her—be a hero, *her* hero—it would be even better than if he had done it before asking her; it would be grander. Besides, she had believed in the war from the beginning.

"But don't you see, dearest," she said, "that it wouldn't have come to this, if it hadn't been in the order of Providence? And I call any war glorious that is for the liberation of people who have been struggling for years against the cruellest oppression. Don't you think so too?"

"I suppose so," he returned, languidly. "But war! Is it glorious to break the peace of the world?"

"That ignoble peace! It was no peace at all, with that crime and shame at our very gates." She was conscious of parroting the current phrases of the newspapers, but it was no time to pick and choose her words. She must sacrifice anything to the high ideal she had for him, and after a good deal of rapid argument she ended with the climax: "But now it doesn't matter about the how or why. Since the war has come, all that is gone. There are no two sides, any more. There is nothing now but our country."

He sat with his eyes closed and his head leant back against the veranda, and he said with a vague smile, as if musing aloud, "Our country—right or wrong."

"Yes, right or wrong!" she returned fervidly. "I'll go and get you some lemonade." She rose rustling, and whisked away; when she came back with two tall glasses of clouded liquid, on a tray, and the ice clucking in them, he still sat as she had left him, and she said as if there had been no interruption: "But there is no question of wrong in this case. I call it a sacred war. A war for liberty, and humanity, if ever there was one. And I know you will see it just as I do, yet."

He took half the lemonade at a gulp, and he answered as he set the glass down: "I know you always have the highest idea. When I differ from you, I ought to doubt myself."

A generous sob rose in Editha's throat for the humility of a man, so very nearly perfect, who was willing to put himself below her.

Besides, she felt, more subliminally, that he was never so near slipping through her fingers as when he took that meek way.

"You shall not say that! Only, for once I happen to be right." She seized his hand in her two hands, and poured her soul from her eyes into his. "Don't you think so?" she entreated him.

He released his hand and drank the rest of his lemonade, and she added, "Have mine, too," but he shook his head in answering,

"I've no business to think so, unless I act so, too."

Her heart stopped a beat before it pulsed on with leaps that she felt in her neck. She had noticed that strange thing in men; they seemed to feel bound to do what they believed, and not think a thing was finished when they said it, as girls did. She knew what was in his mind, but she pretended not, and she said, "Oh, I am not sure," and then faltered.

He went on as if to himself without apparently heeding her, "There's only one way of proving one's faith in a thing like this."

She could not say that she understood, but she did understand.

He went on again. "If I believed—if I felt as you do about this war—Do you wish me to feel as you do?"

Now she was really not sure; so she said, "George, I don't know what you mean."

He seemed to muse away from her as before. "There is a sort of fascination in it. I suppose that at the bottom of his heart every man would like at times to have his courage tested; to see how he would act."

"How can you talk in that ghastly way?"

"It is rather morbid. Still, that's what it comes to, unless you're swept away by ambition, or driven by conviction. I haven't the conviction or the ambition, and the other thing is what it comes to with me. I ought to have been a preacher, after all; then I couldn't have asked it of myself, as I must, now I'm a lawyer. And you believe it's a holy war, Editha?" he suddenly addressed her. "Or, I know you do! But you wish me to believe so, too?"

She hardly knew whether he was mocking or not, in the ironical way he always had with her plainer mind. But the only thing was to be outspoken with him.

"George, I wish you to believe whatever you think is true, at any and every cost. If I've tried to talk you into anything, I take it all back."

"Oh, I know that, Editha. I know how sincere you are, and how—I wish I had your undoubting spirit! I'll think it over; I'd like to believe as you do. But I don't, now; I don't, indeed. It isn't this war alone; though this seems peculiarly wanton and needless; but it's every war—so stupid; it makes me sick. Why shouldn't this thing have been settled reasonably?"

"Because," she said, very throatily again, "God meant it to be war."

"You think it was God? Yes, I suppose that is what people will say."

"Do you suppose it would have been war if God hadn't meant it?"

"I don't know. Sometimes it seems as if God had put this world

into men's keeping to work it as they pleased."

"Now, George, that is blasphemy."

"Well, I won't blaspheme. I'll try to believe in your pocket Providence," he said, and then he rose to go.

"Why don't you stay to dinner?" Dinner at Balcom's Works was at one o'clock.

"I'll come back to supper, if you'll let me. Perhaps I shall bring you a convert."

"Well, you may come back, on that condition."

"All right. If I don't come, you'll understand."

He went away without kissing her, and she felt it a suspension of their engagement. It all interested her intensely; she was undergoing a tremendous experience, and she was being equal to it. While she stood looking after him, her mother came out through one of the long windows, on to the veranda, with a catlike softness and vagueness.

"Why didn't he stay to dinner?"

"Because—because—war has been declared," Editha pronounced, without turning.

Her mother said, "Oh, my!" and then said nothing more until she had sat down in one of the large Shaker chairs, and rocked herself for some time. Then she closed whatever tacit passage of thought there had been in her mind with the spoken words, "Well, I hope *he* won't go."

"And I hope *he will*," the girl said, and confronted her mother with a stormy exultation that would have frightened any creature less unimpressionable than a cat.

Her mother rocked herself again for an interval of cogitation. What she arrived at in speech was, "Well, I guess you've done a wicked thing, Editha Balcom."

The girl said, as she passed indoors through the same window her mother had come out by, "I haven't done anything—yet."

In her room, she put together all her letters and gifts from Gearson, down to the withered petals of the first flower he had offered, with that timidity of his veiled in that irony of his. In the heart of the packet she enshrined her engagement ring which she had restored to the pretty box he had brought it her in. Then she sat down, if not calmly yet strongly, and wrote:

"George: I understood—when you left me. But I think we had better emphasize your meaning that if we cannot be one in everything we had better be one in nothing. So I am sending these things for your keeping till you have made up your mind.

"I shall always love you, and therefore I shall never marry any one else. But the man I marry must love his country first of all, and be able to say to me,



'I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honor more.'

"There is no honor above America with me. In this great hour there is no other honor.

"Your heart will make my words clear to you. I have never expected to say so much, but it has come upon me that I must say the utmost.

Editha."

She thought she had worded her letter well, worded it in a way that could not be bettered; all had been implied and nothing expressed.

She had it ready to send with the packet she had tied with red, white, and blue ribbon, when it occurred to her that she was not just to him, that she was not giving him a fair chance. He had said he would go and think it over, and she was not waiting. She was pushing, threatening, compelling. That was not a woman's part. She must leave him free, free, free. She could not accept for her country or herself a forced sacrifice.

In writing her letter she had satisfied the impulse from which it sprang; she could well afford to wait till he had thought it over. She put the packet and the letter by, and rested serene in the consciousness of having done what was laid upon her by her love itself to do, and yet used patience, mercy, justice.

She had her reward. Garson did not come to tea, but she had given him till morning, when, late at night there came up from the village the sound of a fife and drum with a tumult of voices, in shouting, singing, and laughing. The noise drew nearer and nearer; it reached the street end of the avenue; there it silenced itself, and one voice, the voice she knew best, rose over the silence. It fell; the air was filled with cheers; the fife and drum struck up, with the shouting, singing, and laughing again, but now retreating; and a single figure came hurrying up the avenue.

She ran down to meet her lover and clung to him. He was very gay, and he put his arm round her with a boisterous laugh. "Well, you must call me Captain, now; or Cap, if you prefer; that's what the boys call me. Yes, we've had a meeting at the town hall, and everybody has volunteered; and they selected me for captain, and I'm going to the war, the big war, the glorious war, the holy war ordained by the pocket Providence that blesses butchery. Come along; let's tell the whole family about it. Call them from their downy beds, father, mother, Aunt Hitty, and all the folks!"

But when they mounted the veranda steps he did not wait for a larger audience; he poured the story out upon Editha alone.

"There was a lot of speaking, and then some of the fools set up a shout for me. It was all going one way, and I thought it would be a good joke to sprinkle a little cold water on them. But you can't do that with a crowd that adores you. The first thing I knew I was sprinkling hell-fire on them. 'Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war.' That was the style. Now that it had come to the fight, there were no two parties; there was one country, and the thing was to fight the fight to a finish as quick as possible. I suggested volunteering then and there, and I wrote my name first of all on the roster. Then they elected me—that's all. I wish I had some ice-water!"

She left him walking up and down the veranda, while she ran for the ice-pitcher and a goblet, and when she came back he was still walking up and down, shouting the story he had told her to her father and mother, who had come out more sketchily dressed than they commonly were by day. He drank goblet after goblet of the ice-water without noticing who was giving it, and kept on talking, and laughing through his talk wildly. "It's astonishing," he said, "how well the worse reason looks when you try to make it appear the better. Why, I believe I was the first convert to the war in that crowd to-night! I never thought I should like to kill a man; but now, I shouldn't care; and the smokeless powder lets you see the man drop that you kill. It's all for the country! What a thing it is to have a country that *can't* be wrong, but if it is, is right anyway!"

Edittha had a great, vital thought, an inspiration. She set down the ice-pitcher on the veranda floor, and ran up-stairs and got the letter she had written him. When at last he noisily bade her father and mother, "Well, good night. I forgot I woke you up; I sha'n't want any sleep myself," she followed him down the avenue to the gate. There, after the whirling words that seemed to fly away from her thoughts and refuse to serve them, she made a last effort to solemnize the moment that seemed so crazy, and pressed the letter she had written upon him.

"What's this?" he said, "Want me to mail it?"

"No, no. It's for you. I wrote it after you went this morning. Keep it—keep it—and read it sometime—" She thought, and then her inspiration came: "Read it if ever you doubt what you've done, or fear that I regret your having done it. Read it after you've started."

They strained each other in embraces that seemed as ineffective as their words, and he kissed her face with quick, hot breaths that were so unlike him, that made her feel as if she had lost her old lover and found a stranger in his place. The stranger said, "What a gorgeous flower you are, with your red hair, and your blue eyes that look black now, and your face with the color painted out by

the white moonshine! Let me hold you under my chin, to see whether I love blood, you tiger-lily!" Then he laughed Gearson's laugh, and released her, scared and giddy. Within her wilfulness she had been frightened by a sense of subtler force in him, and mystically mastered as she had never been before.

She ran all the way back to the house, and mounted the steps panting. Her mother and father were talking of the great affair. Her mother said: "Wa'n't Mr. Gearson in rather of an excited state of mind? Didn't you think he acted curious?"

"Well, not for a man who'd just been elected captain and had to set 'em up for the whole of Company A," her father chuckled back.

"What in the world do you mean, Mr. Balcom? Oh! There's Editha!" She offered to follow the girl indoors.

"Don't come, mother!" Editha called, vanishing.

Mrs. Balcom remained to reproach her husband. "I don't see much of anything to laugh at."

"Well, it's catching. Caught it from Gearson. I guess it won't be much of a war, and I guess Gearson don't think so, either. The other fellows will back down as soon as they see we mean it. I wouldn't lose any sleep over it. I'm going back to bed, myself."

Gearson came again next afternoon, looking pale, and rather sick, but quite himself even to his languid irony. "I guess I'd better tell you, Editha, that I consecrated myself to your god of battles last night by pouring too many libations to him down my own throat. But I'm all right, now. One has to carry off the excitement, somehow."

"Promise me," she commanded, "that you'll never touch it again!"

"What! Not let the cannikin clink? Not let the soldier drink? Well, I promise."

"You don't belong to yourself now; you don't even belong to *me*. You belong to your country, and you have a sacred charge to keep yourself strong and well for your country's sake. I have been thinking, thinking all night and all day long."

"You look as if you had been crying a little, too," he said with his queer smile.

"That's all past. I've been thinking, and worshipping *you*. Don't you suppose I know all that you've been through, to come to this? I've followed you every step from your old theories and opinions."

"Well, you've had a long row to hoe."

"And I know you've done this from the highest motives—"

"Oh, there won't be much pettifogging to do till this cruel war is—"

"And you haven't simply done it for my sake. I couldn't respect

you if you had."

"Well, then we'll say I haven't. A man that hasn't got his own respect intact wants the respect of all the other people he can corner. But we won't go into that. I'm in for the thing now, and we've got to face our future. My idea is that this isn't going to be a very protracted struggle; we shall just scare the enemy to death before it comes to a fight at all. But we must provide for contingencies, Editha. If anything happens to me—"

"Oh, George!" She clung to him sobbing.

"I don't want you to feel foolishly bound to my memory. I should hate that, wherever I happened to be."

"I am yours, for time and eternity—time and eternity." She liked the words; they satisfied her famine for phrases.

"Well, say eternity, that's all right; but time's another thing; and I'm talking about time. But there is something! My mother! If anything happens—"

She winced, and he laughed. "You're not the bold soldier-girl of yesterday!" Then he sobered. "If anything happens, I want you to help my mother out. She won't like my doing this thing. She brought me up to think war a fool thing as well as a bad thing. My father was in the civil war; all through it; lost his arm in it." She thrilled with the sense of the arm round her; what if that should be lost? He laughed as if divining her: "Oh, it doesn't run in the family, as far as I know!" Then he added, gravely, "He came home with misgivings about war, and they grew on him. I guess he and mother agreed between them that I was to be brought up in his final mind about it; but that was before my time. I only knew him from my mother's report of him and his opinions; I don't know whether they were hers first; but they were hers last. This will be a blow to her. I shall have to write and tell her—"

He stopped, and she asked, "Would you like me to write too, George?"

"I don't believe that would do. No, I'll do the writing. She'll understand a little if I say that I thought the way to minimize it was to make war on the largest possible scale at once—that I felt I must have been helping on the war somehow if I hadn't helped keep it from coming, and I knew I hadn't; when it came, I had no right to stay out of it."

Whether his sophistries satisfied him or not, they satisfied her. She clung to his breast, and whispered, with closed eyes and quivering lips, "Yes, yes, yes!"

"But if anything should happen, you might go to her, and see what you could do for her. You know? It's rather far off; she can't leave her chair—"

"Oh, I'll go, if it's the ends of the earth! But nothing will happen! Nothing *can*! I—"

She felt herself lifted with his rising, and Gearson was saying, with his arm still around her, to her father: "Well, we're off at once, Mr. Balcom. We're to be formally accepted at the capital, and then bunched up with the rest somehow, and sent into camp somewhere, and got to the front as soon as possible. We all want to be in the van, of course; we're the first company to report to the Governor. I came to tell Editha, but I hadn't got round to it."

She saw him again for a moment at the capital, in the station, just before the train started southward with his regiment. He looked well, in his uniform, and very soldierly, but somehow girlish, too, with his clean-shaven face and slim figure. The manly eyes and the strong voice satisfied her, and his preoccupation with some unexpected details of duty flattered her. Other girls were weeping and bemoaning themselves, but she felt a sort of noble distinction in the abstraction, the almost unconsciousness, with which they parted. Only at the last moment he said, "Don't forget my mother. It mayn't be such a walkover as I supposed," and he laughed at the notion.

He waved his hand to her, as the train moved off—she knew it among a score of hands that were waved to other girls from the platform of the car, for it held a letter which she knew was hers. Then he went inside the car to read it, doubtless, and she did not see him again. But she felt safe for him through the strength of what she called her love. What she called her God, always speaking the name in a deep voice and with the implication of a mutual understanding, would watch over him and keep him and bring him back to her. If with an empty sleeve, then he should have three arms instead of two, for both of hers should be his for life. She did not see, though, why she should always be thinking of the arm his father had lost.

There were not many letters from him, but they were such as she could have wished, and she put her whole strength into making hers such as she imagined he could have wished, glorifying and supporting him. She wrote to his mother glorifying him as their hero, but the brief answer she got was merely to the effect that Mrs. Gearson was not well enough to write herself, and thanking her for her letter by the hand of some one who called herself "Yrs truly, Mrs. W. J. Andrews."

Editha determined not to be hurt, but to write again quite as if the answer had been all she expected. But before it seemed as if she could have written, there came news of the first skirmish, and in the list of the killed which was telegraphed as a trifling loss on our side, was Gearson's name. There was a frantic time of trying to make out that it might be, must be, some other Gearson; but the name, and the company and the regiment, and the State were too

definitely given.

Then there was a lapse into depths out of which it seemed as if she never could rise again; then a lift into clouds far above all grief, black clouds, that blotted out the sun, but where she soared with him, with George, George! She had the fever that she expected of herself, but she did not die in it; she was not even delirious, and it did not last long. When she was well enough to leave her bed, her one thought was of George's mother, of his strangely worded wish that she should go to her and see what she could do for her. In the exultation of the duty laid upon her—it buoyed her up instead of burdening her—she rapidly recovered.

Her father went with her on the long railroad journey from northern New York to western Iowa; he had business out at Davenport, and he said he could just as well go then as any other time; and he went with her to the little country town where George's mother lived in a little house on the edge of illimitable corn-fields, under trees pushed to a top of the rolling prairie. George's father had settled there after the civil war, as so many other old soldiers had done; but they were Eastern people, and Editha fancied touches of the East in the June rose overhanging the front door, and the garden with early summer flowers stretching from the gate of the paling fence.

It was very low inside the house, and so dim, with the closed blinds, that they could scarcely see one another: Editha tall and black in her crapes which filled the air with the smell of their dyes; her father standing decorously apart with his hat on his forearm, as at funerals; a woman rested in a deep armchair, and the woman who had let the strangers in stood behind the chair.

The seated woman turned her head round and up, and asked the women behind her chair, "*Who* did you say?"

Editha, if she had done what she expected of herself, would have gone down on her knees at the feet of the seated figure and said, "I am George's Editha," for answer.

But instead of her own voice she heard that other woman's voice, saying, "Well, I don't know as I *did* get the name just right. I guess I'll have to make a little more light in here," and she went and pushed two of the shutters ajar.

Then Editha's father said in his public will-now-address-a-few-remarks tone, "My name is Balcom, ma'am; Junius H. Balcom, of Balcom's Works, New York; my daughter—"

"Oh!" The seated woman broke in, with a powerful voice, the voice that always surprised Editha from Gearson's slender frame. "Let me see you! Stand round where the light can strike on your face," and Editha dumbly obeyed. "So, you're Editha Balcom," she sighed.

"Yes," Editha said, more like a culprit than a comforter.

"What did you come for?" Mrs. Gearson asked.

Editha's face quivered, and her knees shook. "I came—because—because George—" She could go no farther.

"Yes," the mother said, "he told me he had asked you to come if he got killed. You didn't expect that, I suppose, when you sent him."

"I would rather have died myself than done it!" Editha said with more truth in her deep voice than she ordinarily found in it. "I tried to leave him free—"

"Yes, that letter of yours, that came back with his other things, left him free."

Editha saw now where George's irony came from.

"It was not to be read before—unless—until—I told him so," she faltered.

"Of course, he wouldn't read a letter of yours, under the circumstances, till he thought you wanted him to. Been sick?" the woman abruptly demanded.

"Very sick," Editha said, with self-pity.

"Daughter's life," her father interposed, "was almost despaired of, at one time."

Mrs. Gearson gave him no heed. "I suppose you would have been glad to die, such a brave person as you! I don't believe *he* was glad to die. He was always a timid boy, that way; he was afraid of a good many things; but if he was afraid he did what he made up his mind to. I suppose he made up his mind to go, but I knew what it cost him, by what it cost me when I heard of it. I had been through *one* war before. When you sent him you didn't expect he would get killed."

The voice seemed to compassionate Editha, and it was time. "No," she huskily murmured.

"No, girls don't; women don't, when they give their men up to their country. They think they'll come marching back, somehow, just as gay as they went, or if it's an empty sleeve, or even an empty pantaloons, it's all the more glory, and they're so much the prouder of them, poor things."

The tears began to run down Editha's face; she had not wept till then; but it was now such a relief to be understood that the tears came.

"No, you didn't expect him to get killed," Mrs. Gearson repeated in a voice which was startlingly like George's again. "You just expected him to kill some one else, some of those foreigners, that weren't there because they had any say about it, but because they had to be there, poor wretches—conscripts, or whatever they call 'em. You thought it would be all right for my George, *your* George, to kill the sons of those miserable mothers and the husbands of those girls that you would never see the faces of." The

woman lifted her powerful voice in a psalmlike note. "I thank my God he didn't live to do it! I thank my God they killed him first, and that he ain't livin' with their blood on his hands!" She dropped her eyes which she had raised with her voice, and glared at Editha. "What you got that black on for?" She lifted herself by her powerful arms so high that her helpless body seemed to hang limp its full length. "Take it off, take it off, before I tear it from your back!"

The lady who was passing the summer near Balcom's Works was sketching Editha's beauty, which lent itself wonderfully to the effects of a colorist. It had come to that confidence which is rather apt to grow between artist and sitter, and Editha had told her everything.

"To think of your having such a tragedy in your life!" the lady said. She added: "I suppose there are people who feel that way about war. But when you consider the good this war has done—how much it has done for the country! I can't understand such people, for my part. And when you had come all the way out there to console her—got up out of a sick bed! Well!"

"I think," Editha said, magnanimously, "she wasn't quite in her right mind; and so did papa."

"Ycs," the lady said, looking at Editha's lips in nature and then at her lips in art, and giving an empirical touch to them in the picture. "But how dreadful of her! How perfectly—excuse me—how *vulgar*!"

A light broke upon Editha in the darkness which she felt had been without a gleam of brightness for weeks and months. The mystery that had bewildered her was solved by the word; and from that moment she rose from grovelling in shame and self-pity, and began to live again in the ideal.

1905, 1907

## HENRY JAMES

(1843–1916)

Born in New York City on April 15, 1843, the brother of the philosopher-scientist William James, Henry James was influenced by the patrician attitudes of his father, who combined an interest in philosophy

and theology with full enjoyment of the cultural life of his own city and of the world. The James children were privately tutored in New York, and received special schooling abroad between 1855 and 1860, when



the family lived in London, Switzerland, France, and Germany—everywhere at a level of intense intellectual activity. Henry James studied painting briefly; but at the age of nineteen was admitted to Harvard Law School. Two years later he had plunged into authorship, and he won his way into the best literary magazines. Two long trips abroad are reflected in his *Atlantic* story "A Passionate Pilgrim" (1871), motivated by the cultural attraction and repulsion between England and America. The year before, Mary Temple, James's beloved cousin, had died; by 1876 he was settled in London, and thereafter made his home in England. In 1915, impatient at America's aloofness from World War I, he became a British citizen.

In 1875 he published his first collection of stories, *A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales*, and the *Atlantic* serialized his first novel of consequence, *Roderick Hudson*, in which a talented young American sculptor is transplanted to Florence for study, only to be crushed and destroyed by the artifice and materialistic cynicism of international society. These works established the theme and the techniques of his first period. Spending much time in Paris, he came to know Flaubert and Turgenev. The French and Russian realists and naturalists influenced his style, which became increasingly "chiseled," in Flaubert's sense. He accepted also the naturalists' concept of the novelist as the clinical researcher into life, but did not follow their unselective zeal to report every-

thing observed; he admitted a measure of determinism, but rejected the pessimistic extreme according to which human character becomes the waif of chance.

Among other fine works, *The American* appeared in 1877, *Daisy Miller* in 1879, *The Portrait of a Lady*, his greatest novel of this period, in 1881, and *The Princess Casamassima* in 1886. In the first, a young American, having won a fortune in manufacturing and speculation, seeks abroad the development of cultural satisfactions. In this he succeeds, but he is wretchedly defeated in a genuine love affair by the rigid conventions and ingrained evil of French Bourbon aristocracy. Equally striking in its contrasts of social values is the story of Daisy, a hoydenish, healthy, and wholly lovable American girl of small-town wealth who in Florence runs afoul of the European codes of the cloistered woman. Isabel Archer, the "Lady" of the third novel, another American girl, triumphs over the rigidities of both British and Italian society and survives the bad marriage into which she has been tricked by a cynical fortune hunter and his worldly mistress, to arrive at a kind of austere selfhood and mastery of the Paris social world. In *The Princess Casamassima* James resumes the adventures of the pathetic heroine of *Roderick Hudson* and the cynical society she represents, but he also for once turns his mirror in the opposite direction, catching the social issues inherent in the lives of London's lower orders and the ominous premonitory

specter of a social revolution.

From *The Tragic Muse* (1890) to the end of his career in fiction more than fifteen years later, James developed an increasingly complex style, marked by meaningful ambiguities and ellipses in the dialogue together with convoluted and modifier-ridden exposition. Thus the functions of prose rhythm were enlarged as by no other author in English fiction before Joyce. At the same time, the psychological motivations of his characters became more intense and more frequently abnormal, while the social situations possessed increasing subtlety. The earliest of the principal novels of this so-called "major phase" was *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), in which the possession of a house and its *objets d'art* corrupts certain members of a family and their associates, and produces spiritual ruin and psychological disorder. *What Maisie Knew* (1897) uses the innocence of a little girl as the center of revelation for the idle and destructive amours of her divorced parents, with whom she lives alternately. *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) is superficially a story of the supernatural, involving two children and their governess in an ancient British country house, but fundamentally it studies the pathological effects of an evil influence from the past upon the innocence of the children. *The Awkward Age* (1899) follows the emotional life of Nanda Brook- enham from the innocence of girlhood seclusion into her mother's sophisticated and selfish social world, through the period of matrimonial barter into

a kind of detached acceptance. *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) studies the betrayal of the lovely Milly Theale by the cynical and fortune-hunting adultery carried on between her betrothed and her best friend, and her innocent revenge on their amorality. *The Ambassadors* (1903) is a brilliant and sardonic account of a succession of emissaries who attempt to persuade an American heir to leave Paris to take charge of his profitable business interests in Massachusetts, only to have the ambassadors themselves converted or diverted by Paris. In *The Golden Bowl* (1904) the admirable Maggie Verver is confronted with a continuing liaison between her husband and her father's young wife—her former friend. Her love and tact, together with her father's sensitive maturity, saves them all.

The short stories and the novelettes of James are not minor works except in their length. In general they follow the patterns that have been suggested above for the novels. The critical writings of James, even excluding the penetrating essays with which he prefaced the New York Edition of the novels, would have given him a position as a major critic if he had not made his reputation as a novelist. His several dramas were not acceptable to the stage, in contrast with some of his novels recently staged with success: *Washington Square* (as *The Heiress*, 1948), *The Turn of the Screw* (as *The Innocents*, 1952), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1954).

In his effort, through the in-

ternational novel, to find a kind of cultural unity in western civilization, and in his turning to the older centers rather than to the newer soil of America, Henry James expressed a yearning which, although not confined to American authors, was certainly expressed dramatically by American expatriation during the years from his own generation to that of Eliot.

James's belief that prose was as subject as poetry to intensification and to investment with symbolic value has been profoundly influential on the generations since his death. He was a pioneer in utilizing psychological devices which communicated the more intense realization of character and situation. By transferring what he called "central consciousness" to the awakening mind of an innocent child, or to the confessional pages of a diary, for example, he implicated the reader in the analytic process and in the story itself, foreshadowing such psychological instruments as stream of consciousness.

Among the authors he influenced were Lawrence, Joyce, Conrad, Edith Wharton, Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather, and Eliot. In contrast with the European naturalists whose tutelage he acknowledged, he rebelled against the materialistic interpretation of human destiny, and struggled with the problem of undeniable evil as desperately as Hawthorne, whom, among ear-

lier Americans, he most admired. He offset his portrayals of the evil tendencies of life toward greed, treachery, and pathological dualism by the constant representation of innocence, lofty choices, and moral idealism. His experience of life may seem limited and specialized, but he employed it for great and far-reaching ends.

The best edition of James's works, containing his last revised texts and valuable prefaces, is *The Novels and Tales of Henry James*, 26 vols., 1907-1917, known as the New York Edition. There is also a good English edition, *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*, 35 vols., 1921-1923. Philip Rahv edited *The Great Short Novels of Henry James*, 1944; Clifton Fadiman edited *The Short Stories of Henry James*, 1945; and F. O. Matthiessen edited *The American Novels and Stories of Henry James*, 1947. Other recent compilations are *The American Scene*, 1946; *Stories of Writers and Artists*, edited, with an introduction, by F. O. Matthiessen, 1944; *The Scenic Art*, edited by Allan Wade, 1948; and *The Ghostly Tales of Henry James*, with an introduction by Leon Edel, 1948. Leon Edel also edited *The Complete Plays of Henry James*, 1949. Percy Lubbock selected and edited *Letters of Henry James*, 2 vols., 1920. Also important is *The Selected Letters of Henry James*, edited by Leon Edel, 1955. R. P. Blackmur edited *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, 1934. *The Notebooks of Henry James*, 1947, was edited by F. O. Matthiessen and K. B. Murdock.

Important are F. W. Dupee's *Henry James*, revised, 1956, and his edition of the *Autobiography*, 1956. A complete biography is Pelham Edgar, *Henry James: Man and Author*, 1927. Leon Edel is preparing a comprehensive biography, of which *Henry James 1843-1870: The Untried Years*, 1953, has appeared. Other important volumes are J. W. Beach, *The Method of Henry James*, revised, 1954; and F. O. Matthiessen, *Henry James, The Major Phase*, 1944. Leon Edel and Dan H. Laurence compiled *A Bibliography of Henry James*, 1957.

The Real Thing<sup>1</sup>

## I

When the porter's wife, who used to answer the house-bell, announced "A gentleman and a lady, sir," I had, as I often had in those days—the wish being father to the thought—an immediate vision of sitters. Sitters my visitors in this case proved to be; but not in the sense I should have preferred. There was nothing at first however to indicate that they mightn't have come for a portrait. The gentleman, a man of fifty, very high and very straight, with a moustache slightly grizzled and a dark grey walking-coat admirably fitted, both of which I noted professionally—I don't mean as a barber or yet as a tailor—would have struck me as a celebrity if celebrities often were striking. It was a truth of which I had for some time been conscious that a figure with a good deal of frontage was, as one might say, almost never a public institution. A glance at the lady helped to remind me of this paradoxical law: she also looked too distinguished to be a "personality." Moreover one would scarcely come across two variations together.

Neither of the pair immediately spoke—they only prolonged the preliminary gaze suggesting that each wished to give the other a chance. They were visibly shy; they stood there letting me take them in—which, as I afterwards perceived, was the most practical thing they could have done. In this way their embarrassment served their cause. I had seen people painfully reluctant to mention that they desired anything so gross as to be represented on canvas; but

1. " \* \* my much-loved friend George du Maurier had spoken to me of a call from a strange and striking couple desirous to propose themselves as artist's models for his weekly 'social' illustrations to 'Punch,' and the acceptance of whose services would have entailed the dismissal of an undistinguished but highly expert pair, also husband and wife, who had come to him from far back on the irregular day and whom, thanks to a happy, and to that extent lucrative, appearance of 'type' on the part of each, he had reproduced, to the best effect, in a thousand drawing-room attitudes and combinations. Exceedingly modest members of society, they earned their bread by looking and, with the aid of supplied toggery, dressing, greater favourites of fortune to the life; or, otherwise expressed, by skilfully feigning a virtue not in the least native to them. Here meanwhile were their so handsome proposed, so anxious, so almost haggard competitors, originally, by

every sign, of the best condition and estate, but overtaken by reverse even while conforming impeccably to the standard of superficial 'smartness' and pleading with well-bred ease and the right light tone, not to say with feverish gaiety, that (as in the interest of art itself) they at least shouldn't have to 'make believe.' The question thus thrown up by the two friendly critics of the rather lurid little passage was of whether their not having to make believe *would* in fact serve them, and above all serve their interpreter as well as the borrowed graces of the comparatively sordid professionals who had had, for dear life, to *know how* (which was to have learnt how) to do something. The question, I recall, struck me as exquisite, and out of a momentary fond consideration of it 'The Real Thing' sprang at a bound" [James's introduction]. *The Real Thing and Other Tales* appeared in 1893. The present text is based on the original edition.

the scruples of my new friends appeared almost insurmountable. Yet the gentleman might have said "I should like a portrait of my wife," and the lady might have said "I should like a portrait of my husband." Perhaps they weren't husband and wife—this naturally would make the matter more delicate. Perhaps they wished to be done together—in which case they ought to have brought a third person to break the news.

"We come from Mr. Rivet," the lady finally said with a dim smile that had the effect of a moist sponge passed over a "sunk" piece of painting, as well as of a vague allusion to vanished beauty. She was as tall and straight, in her degree, as her companion, and with ten years less to carry. She looked as sad as a woman could look whose face was not charged with expression; that is, her tinted oval mask showed waste as an exposed surface shows friction. The hand of time had played over her freely, but to an effect of elimination. She was slim and stiff, and so well-dressed, in dark blue cloth, with lappets and pockets and buttons, that it was clear she employed the same tailor as her husband. The couple had an indefinable air of prosperous thrift—they evidently got a good deal of luxury for their money. If I was to be one of their luxuries it would behove me to consider my terms.

"Ah, Claude Rivet recommended me?" I echoed; and I added that it was very kind of him, though I could reflect that, as he only painted landscape, this wasn't a sacrifice.

The lady looked very hard at the gentleman, and the gentleman looked round the room. Then staring at the floor a moment and stroking his moustache, he rested his pleasant eyes on me with the remark: "He said you were the right one."

"I try to be, when people want to sit."

"Yes, we should like to," said the lady anxiously.

"Do you mean together?"

My visitors exchanged a glance. "If you could do anything with *me* I suppose it would be double," the gentleman stammered.

"Oh yes, there's naturally a higher charge for two figures than for one."

"We should like to make it pay," the husband confessed.

"That's very good of you," I returned, appreciating so unwonted a sympathy—for I supposed he meant pay the artist.

A sense of strangeness seemed to dawn on the lady. "We mean for the illustrations—Mr. Rivet said you might put one in."

"Put in—an illustration?" I was equally confused.

"Sketch her off, you know," said the gentleman, colouring.

It was only then that I understood the service Claude Rivet had rendered me; he had told them how I worked in black-and-white,

for magazines, for storybooks, for sketches of contemporary life, and consequently had copious employment for models. These things were true, but it was not less true—I may confess it now; whether because the aspiration was to lead to everything or to nothing I leave the reader to guess—that I couldn't get the honours, to say nothing of the emoluments, of a great painter of portraits out of my head. My "illustrations" were my pot-boilers; I looked to a different branch of art—far and away the most interesting it had always seemed to me—to perpetuate my fame. There was no shame in looking to it also to make my fortune; but that fortune was by so much further from being made from the moment my visitors wished to be "done" for nothing. I was disappointed; for in the pictorial sense I had immediately *seen* them. I had seized their type—I had already settled what I would do with it. Something that wouldn't absolutely have pleased them, I afterwards reflected.

"Ah you're—you're—a—?" I began as soon as I had mastered my surprise. I couldn't bring out the dingy word "models": it seemed so little to fit the case.

"We haven't had much practice," said the lady.

"We've got to *do* something, and we've thought that an artist in your line might perhaps make something of us," her husband threw off. He further mentioned that they didn't know many artists and that they had gone first, on the off-chance—he painted views of course, but sometimes put in figures; perhaps I remembered—to Mr. Rivet, whom they had met a few years before at a place in Norfolk where he was sketching.

"We used to sketch a little ourselves," the lady hinted.

"It's very awkward, but we absolutely *must* do something," her husband went on.

"Of course we're not so *very* young," she admitted with a wan smile.

With the remark that I might as well know something more about them the husband had handed me a card extracted from a neat new pocket-book—their appurtenances were all of the freshest—and inscribed with the words "Major Monarch." Impressive as these words were they didn't carry my knowledge much further; but my visitor presently added: "I've left the army and we've had the misfortune to lose our money. In fact our means are dreadfully small."

"It's awfully trying—a regular strain," said Mrs. Monarch.

They evidently wished to be discreet—to take care not to swagger because they were gentlefolk. I felt them willing to recognise this as something of a drawback, at the same time that I guessed at an underlying sense—their consolation in adversity—that they *had*

their points. They certainly had; but these advantages struck me as preponderantly social; such for instance as would help to make a drawing-room look well. However, a drawing-room was always, or ought to be, a picture.

In consequence of his wife's allusion to their age Major Monarch observed: "Naturally it's more for the figure that we thought of going in. We can still hold ourselves up." On the instant I saw that the figure was indeed their strong point. His "naturally" didn't sound vain, but it lighted up the question. "*She* has the best one," he continued, nodding at his wife with a pleasant after-dinner absence of circumlocution. I could only reply, as if we were in fact sitting over our wine, that this didn't prevent his own from being very good; which led him in turn to make answer: "We thought that if you ever have to do people like us we might be something like it. *She* particularly—for a lady in a book, you know."

I was so amused by them that, to get more of it, I did my best to take their point of view; and though it was an embarrassment to find myself appraising physically, as if they were animals on hire or useful blacks, a pair whom I should have expected to meet only in one of the relations in which criticism is tacit, I looked at Mrs. Monarch judiciously enough to be able to exclaim after a moment with conviction: "Oh yes, a lady in a book!" She was singularly like a bad illustration.

"We'll stand up, if you like," said the Major; and he raised himself before me with a really grand air.

I could take his measure at a glance—he was six feet two and a perfect gentleman. It would have paid any club in process of formation and in want of a stamp to engage him at a salary to stand in the principal window. What struck me at once was that in coming to me they had rather missed their vocation; they could surely have been turned to better account for advertising purposes. I couldn't of course see the thing in detail, but I could see them make somebody's fortune—I don't mean their own. There was something in them for a waistcoat-maker, an hotel-keeper or a soap-vendor. I could imagine "We always use it" pinned on their bosoms with the greatest effect; I had a vision of the brilliancy with which they would launch a table d'hôte.

Mrs. Monarch sat still, not from pride but from shyness, and presently her husband said to her: "Get up, my dear, and show how smart you are." She obeyed, but she had no need to get up to show it. She walked to the end of the studio and then came back blushing, her fluttered eyes on the partner of her appeal. I was reminded of an incident I had accidentally had a glimpse of in Paris—being with a friend there, a dramatist about to produce a play,

when an actress came to him to ask to be entrusted with a part. She went through her paces before him, walked up and down as Mrs. Monarch was doing. Mrs. Monarch did it quite as well, but I abstained from applauding. It was very odd to see such people apply for such poor pay. She looked as if she had ten thousand a year. Her husband had used the word that described her: she was in the London current jargon essentially and typically "smart." Her figure was, in the same order of ideas, conspicuously and irreproachably "good." For a woman of her age her waist was surprisingly small; her elbow moreover had the orthodox crook. She held her head at the conventional angle, but why did she come to *me*? She ought to have tried on jackets at a big shop. I feared my visitors were not only destitute but "artistic"—which would be a great complication. When she sat down again I thanked her, observing that what a draughtsman most valued in his model was the faculty of keeping quiet.

"Oh *she* can keep quiet," said Major Monarch. Then he added jocosely: "I've always kept her quiet."

"I'm not a nasty fidget, am I?" It was going to wring tears from me, I felt, the way she hid her head, ostrich-like, in the other broad bosom.

The owner of this expanse addressed his answer to me. "Perhaps it isn't out of place to mention—because we ought to be quite business-like, oughtn't we?—that when I married her she was known as the Beautiful Statue."

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Monarch ruefully.

"Of course I should want a certain amount of expression," I rejoined.

"Of *course!*"—and I had never heard such unanimity.

"And then I suppose you know that you'll get awfully tired."

"Oh we *never* get tired!" they eagerly cried.

"Have you had any kind of practice?"

They hesitated—they looked at each other. "We've been photographed—*immensely*," said Mrs. Monarch.

"She means the fellows have asked us themselves," added the Major.

"I see—because you're so good-looking."

"I don't know what they thought, but they were always after us."

"We always got our photographs for nothing," smiled Mrs. Monarch.

"We might have brought some, my dear," her husband remarked.

"I'm not sure we have any left. We've given quantities away," she explained to me.

"With our autographs and that sort of thing," said the Major.



"Are they to be got in the shops?" I enquired as a harmless pleasantry.

"Oh yes, *hers*—they used to be."

"Not now," said Mrs. Monarch with her eyes on the floor.

II

I could fancy the "sort of thing" they put on the presentation copies of their photographs, and I was sure they wrote a beautiful hand. It was odd how quickly I was sure of everything that concerned them. If they were now so poor as to have to earn shillings and pence they could never have had much of a margin. Their good looks had been their capital, and they had good-humouredly made the most of the career that this resource marked out for them. It was in their faces, the blankness, the deep intellectual repose of the twenty years of country-house visiting that had given them pleasant intonations. I could see the sunny drawing-rooms, sprinkled with periodicals she didn't read, in which Mrs. Monarch had continuously sat; I could see the wet shrubberies in which she had walked, equipped to admiration for either exercise. I could see the rich covers the Major had helped to shoot and the wonderful garments in which, late at night, he repaired to the smoking-room to talk about them. I could imagine their leggings and water-proofs, their knowing tweeds and rugs, their rolls of sticks and cases of tackle and neat umbrellas; and I could evoke the exact appearance of their servants and the compact variety of their luggage on the platforms of country stations.

They gave small tips, but they were liked; they didn't do anything themselves, but they were welcome. They looked so well everywhere; they gratified the general relish for stature, complexion and "form." They knew it without fatuity or vulgarity, and they respected themselves in consequence. They weren't superficial; they were thorough and kept themselves up—it had been their line. People with such a taste for activity had to have some line. I could feel how even in a dull house they could have been counted on for the joy of life. At present something had happened—it didn't matter what, their little income had grown less, it had grown least—and they had to do something for pocket-money. Their friends could like them, I made out, without liking to support them. There was something about them that represented credit—their clothes, their manners, their type; but if credit is a large empty pocket in which an occasional chink reverberates, the chink at least must be audible. What they wanted of me was to help to make it so. Fortunately they had no children—I soon divined that. They would also perhaps wish our relations to be kept secret: this was why it was "for the figure"—the reproduction of the face would betray them.

I liked them—I felt, quite as their friends must have done—they were so simple; and I had no objection to them if they would suit. But somehow with all their perfections I didn't easily believe in them. After all they were amateurs, and the ruling passion of my life was the detestation of the amateur. Combined with this was another perversity—an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one: the defect of the real one was so apt to be a lack of representation. I like things that appeared; then one was sure. Whether they *were* or not was a subordinate and almost always a profitless question. There were other considerations, the first of which was that I already had two or three recruits in use, notably a young person with big feet, in alpaca, from Kilburn, who for a couple of years had come to me regularly for my illustrations and with whom I was still—perhaps ignobly—satisfied. I frankly explained to my visitors how the case stood, but they had taken more precautions than I supposed. They had reasoned out their opportunity, for Claude Rivet had told them of the projected *édition de luxe* of one of the writers of our day—the rarest of the novelists—who, long neglected by the multitudinous vulgar and dearly prized by the attentive (need I mention Philip Vincent?) had had the happy fortune of seeing, late in life, the dawn and then the full light of a higher criticism; an estimate in which on the part of the public there was something really of expiation. The edition preparing, planned by a publisher of taste, was practically an act of high reparation; the wood-cuts with which it was to be enriched were the homage of English art to one of the most independent representatives of English letters. Major and Mrs. Monarch confessed to me they had hoped I might be able to work *them* into my branch of the enterprise. They knew I was to do the first of the books, “Rutland Ramsay,” but I had to make clear to them that my participation in the rest of the affair—this first book was to be a test—must depend on the satisfaction I should give. If this should be limited my employers would drop me with scarce common forms. It was therefore a crisis for me, and naturally I was making special preparations, looking about for new people, should they be necessary, and securing the best types. I admitted however that I should like to settle down to two or three good models who would do for everything.

“Should we have often to—a—put on special clothes?” Mrs. Monarch timidly demanded.

“Dear yes—that’s half the business.”

“And should we be expected to supply our own costumes?”

“Oh no; I’ve got a lot of things. A painter’s models put on—or put off—anything he likes.”

“And you mean—a—the same?”

"The same?"

Mrs. Monarch looked at her husband again.

"Oh she was just wondering," he explained, "if the costumes are in *general* use." I had to confess that they were, and I mentioned further that some of them—I had a lot of genuine greasy last-century things—had served their time, a hundred years ago, on living world-stained men and women; on figures not perhaps so far removed, in that vanished world, from *their* type, the Monarchs', *quoi!* of a breeched and bewigged age. "We'll put on anything that fits," said the Major.

"Oh I arrange that—they fit in the pictures."

"I'm afraid I should do better for the modern books. I'd come as you like," said Mrs. Monarch.

"She has got a lot of clothes at home: they might do for contemporary life," her husband continued.

"Oh I can fancy scenes in which you'd be quite natural." And indeed I could see the slipshod rearrangements of stale properties—the stories I tried to produce pictures for without the exasperation of reading them—whose sandy tracts the good lady might help to people. But I had to return to the fact that for this sort of work—the daily mechanical grind—I was already equipped: the people I was working with were fully adequate.

"We only thought we might be more like *some* characters," said Mrs. Monarch mildly, getting up.

Her husband also rose; he stood looking at me with a dim wistfulness that was touching in so fine a man. "Wouldn't it be rather a pull sometimes to have—a—to have—?" He hung fire; he wanted me to help him by phrasing what he meant. But I couldn't—I didn't know. So he brought it out awkwardly: "The *real* thing; a gentleman, you know, or a lady." I was quite ready to give a general assent—I admitted that there was a great deal in that. This encouraged Major Monarch to say, following up his appeal with an unacted gulp: "It's awfully hard—we've tried everything." The gulp was communicative; it proved too much for his wife. Before I knew it Mrs. Monarch had dropped again upon a divan and burst into tears. Her husband sat down beside her, holding one of her hands; whereupon she quickly dried her eyes with the other, while I felt embarrassed as she looked up at me. "There isn't a con-founded job I haven't applied for—waited for—prayed for. You can fancy we'd be pretty bad first. Secretaryships and that sort of thing? You might as well ask for a peerage. I'd be *anything*—I'm strong; a messenger or a coalheaver. I'd put on a gold-laced cap and open carriage-doors in front of the haberdasher's; I'd hang about a station to carry portmanteaux; I'd be a postman. But they won't *look* at you; there are thousands as good as yourself already on the ground.

*Gentlemen*, poor beggars, who've drunk their wine, who've kept their hunters!"

I was as reassuring as I knew how to be, and my visitors were presently on their feet again while, for the experiment, we agreed on an hour. We were discussing it when the door opened and Miss Churm came in with a wet umbrella. Miss Churm had to take the omnibus to Maida Vale and then walk half a mile. She looked a trifle blowsy and slightly splashed. I scarcely ever saw her come in without thinking afresh how odd it was that, being so little in herself, she should yet be so much in others. She was a meagre little Miss Churm, but was such an ample heroine of romance. She was only a freckled cockney,<sup>2</sup> but she could represent everything, from a fine lady to a shepherdess; she had the faculty as she might have had a fine voice or long hair. She couldn't spell and she loved beer, but she had two or three "points," and practice, and a knack, and mother-wit, and a whimsical sensibility, and a love of the theatre, and seven sisters, and not an ounce of respect, especially for the *h*. The first thing my visitors saw was that her umbrella was wet, and in their spotless perfection they visibly winced at it. The rain had come on since their arrival.

"I'm all in a soak; there was a mess of people in the 'bus. I wish you lived near a styton," said Miss Churm. I requested her to get ready as quickly as possible, and she passed into the room in which she always changed her dress. But before going out she asked me what she was to get into this time.

"It's the Russian princess, don't you know?" I answered; "the one with the 'golden eyes,' in black velvet, for the long thing in the *Cheapside*."

"Golden eyes? I say!" cried Miss Churm, while my companions watched her with intensity as she withdrew. She always arranged herself, when she was late, before I could turn round; and I kept my visitors a little on purpose, so that they might get an idea, from seeing her, what would be expected of themselves. I mentioned that she was quite my notion of an excellent model—she was really very clever.

"Do you think she looks like a Russian princess?" Major Monarch asked with lurking alarm.

"When I make her, yes."

"Oh if you have to *make* her—!" he reasoned, not without point.

"That's the most you can ask. There are so many who are not makeable."

"Well now, *here's* a lady"—and with a persuasive smile he passed his arm into his wife's—"who's already made!"

2. A native of London's East End slums.

"Oh I'm not a Russian princess," Mrs. Monarch protested a little coldly. I could see she had known some and didn't like them. There at once was a complication of a kind I never had to fear with Miss Churm.

This young lady came back in black velvet—the gown was rather rusty and very low on her lean shoulders—and with a Japanese fan in her red hands. I reminded her that in the scene I was doing she had to look over some one's head. "I forget whose it is; but it doesn't matter. Just look over a head."

"I'd rather look over a stove," said Miss Churm; and she took her station near the fire. She fell into position, settled herself into a tall attitude, gave a certain backward inclination to her head and a certain forward droop to her fan, and looked, at least to my prejudiced sense, distinguished and charming, foreign and dangerous. We left her looking so while I went downstairs with Major and Mrs. Monarch.

"I believe I could come about as near it as that," said Mrs. Monarch.

"Oh you think she's shabby, but you must allow for the alchemy of art."

However, they went off with an evident increase of comfort founded on their demonstrable advantage in being the real thing. I could fancy them shuddering over Miss Churm. She was very droll about them when I went back, for I told her what they wanted.

"Well, if *she* can sit I'll tyke to book-keeping," said my model.

"She's very ladylike," I replied as an innocent form of aggravation.

"So much the worse for you. That means she can't turn round."

"She'll do for the fashionable novels."

"Oh yes, she'll do for them!" my model humorously declared. "Ain't they bad enough without her?" I had often sociably denounced them to Miss Churm.

### III

It was for the elucidation of a mystery in one of these works that I first tried Mrs. Monarch. Her husband came with her, to be useful if necessary—it was sufficiently clear that as a general thing he would prefer to come with her. At first I wondered if this were for "propriety's" sake—if he were going to be jealous and meddling. The idea was too tiresome, and if it had been confirmed it would speedily have brought our acquaintance to a close. But I soon saw there was nothing in it and that if he accompanied Mrs. Monarch it was—in addition to the chance of being wanted—simply because he had nothing else to do. When they were separate his occupa-

tion was gone and they never *had* been separate. I judged rightly that in their awkward situation their close union was their main comfort and that this union had no weak spot. It was a real marriage, an encouragement to the hesitating, a nut for pessimists to crack. Their address was humble—I remember afterwards thinking it had been the only thing about them that was really professional—and I could fancy the lamentable lodgings in which the Major would have been left alone. He could sit there more or less grimly with his wife—he couldn't sit there anyhow without her.

He had too much tact to try and make himself agreeable when he couldn't be useful; so when I was too absorbed in my work to talk he simply sat and waited. But I liked to hear him talk—it made my work, when not interrupting it, less mechanical, less special. To listen to him was to combine the excitement of going out with the economy of staying at home. There was only one hindrance—that I seemed not to know any of the people this brilliant couple had known. I think he wondered extremely, during the term of our intercourse, whom the deuce I *did* know. He hadn't a stray sixpence of an idea to fumble for, so we didn't spin it very fine; we confined ourselves to questions of leather and even of liquor—saddlers and breeches-makers and how to get excellent claret cheap—and matters like “good trains” and the habits of small game. His lore on these last subjects was astonishing—he managed to interweave the station-master with the ornithologist. When he couldn't talk about greater things he could talk cheerfully about smaller, and since I couldn't accompany him into reminiscences of the fashionable world he could lower the conversation without a visible effort to my level.

So earnest a desire to please was touching in a man who could so easily have knocked one down. He looked after the fire and had an opinion on the draught of the stove without my asking him, and I could see that he thought many of my arrangements not half knowing. I remember telling him that if I were only rich I'd offer him a salary to come and teach me how to live. Sometimes he gave a random sigh of which the essence might have been: “Give me even such a bare old barrack as *this*, and I'd do something with it!” When I wanted to use him he came alone; which was an illustration of the superior courage of women. His wife could bear her solitary second floor, and she was in general more discreet; showing by various small reserves that she was alive to the propriety of keeping our relations markedly professional—not letting them slide into sociability. She wished it to remain clear that she and the Major were employed, not cultivated, and if she approved of me as a superior, who could be kept in his place, she never thought me quite good enough for an equal.

She sat with great intensity, giving the whole of her mind to it, and was capable of remaining for an hour almost as motionless as before a photographer's lens. I could see she had been photographed often, but somehow the very habit that made her good for that purpose unfitted her for mine. At first I was extremely pleased with her ladylike air, and it was a satisfaction, on coming to follow her lines, to see how good they were and how far they could lead the pencil. But after a little skirmishing I began to find her too insurmountably stiff; do what I would with it my drawing looked like a photograph or a copy of a photograph. Her figure had no variety of expression—she herself had no sense of variety. You may say that this was my business and was only a question of placing her. Yet I placed her in every conceivable position and she managed to obliterate their differences. She was always a lady certainly, and into the bargain was always the same lady. She was the real thing, but always the same thing. There were moments when I rather writhed under the serenity of her confidence that she *was* the real thing. All her dealings with me and all her husband's were an implication that this was lucky for *me*. Meanwhile I found myself trying to invent types that approached her own, instead of making her own transform itself—in the clever way that was not impossible for instance to poor Miss Churm. Arrange as I would and take the precautions I would, she always came out, in my pictures, too tall—landing me in the dilemma of having represented a fascinating woman as seven feet high, which (out of respect perhaps to my own very much scantier inches) was far from my idea of such a personage.

The case was worse with the Major—nothing I could do would keep *him* down, so that he became useful only for the representation of brawny giants. I adored variety and range, I cherished human accidents, the illustrative note; I wanted to characterise closely, and the thing in the world I most hated was the danger of being ridden by a type. I had quarrelled with some of my friends about it: I had parted company with them for maintaining that one *had* to be, and that if the type was beautiful—witness Raphael and Leonardo—the servitude was only a gain. I was neither Leonardo nor Raphael—I might only be a presumptuous young modern searcher; but I held that everything was to be sacrificed sooner than character. When they claimed that the obsessional form could easily *be* character I retorted, perhaps superficially, "Whose?" It couldn't be everybody's—it might end in being nobody's.

After I had drawn Mrs. Monarch a dozen times I felt surer even than before that the value of such a model as Miss Churm resided precisely in the fact that she had no positive stamp, combined of course with the other fact that what she did have was a curious and inexplicable talent for imitation. Her usual appearance was

like a curtain which she could draw up at request for a capital performance. This performance was simply suggestive; but it was a word to the wise—it was vivid and pretty. Sometimes even I thought it, though she was plain herself, too insipidly pretty; I made it a reproach to her that the figures drawn from her were monotonously (*bêtement*,<sup>3</sup> as we used to say) graceful. Nothing made her more angry; it was so much her pride to feel she could sit for characters that had nothing in common with each other. She would accuse me at such moments of taking away her “reputytion.”

It suffered a certain shrinkage, this queer quantity, from the repeated visits of my new friends. Miss Churm was greatly in demand, never in want of employment, so I had no scruple in putting her off occasionally, to try them more at my ease. It was certainly amusing at first to do the real thing—it was amusing to do Major Monarch’s trousers. They *were* the real thing, even if he did come out colossal. It was amusing to do his wife’s back hair—it was so mathematically neat—and the particular “smart” tension of her tight stays. She lent herself especially to positions in which the face was somewhat averted or blurred; she abounded in ladylike back views and *profils perdus*.<sup>4</sup> When she stood erect she took naturally one of the attitudes in which court-painters represent queens and princesses; so that I found myself wondering whether, to draw out this accomplishment, I couldn’t get the editor of the *Cheapside* to publish a really royal romance, “A Tale of Buckingham Palace.” Sometimes however the real thing and the make-believe came into contact; by which I mean that Miss Churm, keeping an appointment or coming to make one on days when I had much work in hand, encountered her invidious rivals. The encounter was not on their part, for they noticed her no more than if she had been the housemaid; not from intentional loftiness, but simply because as yet, professionally, they didn’t know how to fraternise, as I could imagine they would have liked—or at least that the Major would. They couldn’t talk about the omnibus—they always walked; and they didn’t know what else to try—she wasn’t interested in good trains or cheap claret. Besides, they must have felt—in the air—that she was amused at them, secretly derisive of their ever knowing how. She wasn’t a person to conceal the limits of her faith if she had had a chance to show them. On the other hand Mrs. Monarch didn’t think her tidy; for why else did she take pains to say to me—it was going out of the way, for Mrs. Monarch—that she didn’t like dirty women?

One day when my young lady happened to be present with my other sitters—she even dropped in, when it was convenient, for a chat—I asked her to be so good as to lend a hand in getting tea, a

3. Foolishly.

4. Half-rear views “losing” most of the profile.



service with which she was familiar and which was one of a class that, living as I did in a small way, with slender domestic resources, I often appealed to my models to render. They liked to lay hands on my property, to break the sitting, and sometimes the china—it made them feel Bohemian. The next time I saw Miss Churm after this incident she surprised me greatly by making a scene about it—she accused me of having wished to humiliate her. She hadn't resented the outrage at the time, but had seemed obliging and amused, enjoying the comedy of asking Mrs. Monarch, who sat vague and silent, whether she would have cream and sugar, and putting an exaggerated simper into the question. She had tried intonations—as if she too wished to pass for the real thing—till I was afraid my other visitors would take offence.

Oh, they were determined not to do this, and their touching patience was the measure of their great need. They would sit by the hour, uncomplaining, till I was ready to use them; they would come back on the chance of being wanted and would walk away cheerfully if it failed. I used to go to the door with them to see in what magnificent order they retreated. I tried to find other employment for them—I introduced them to several artists. But they didn't "take," for reasons I could appreciate, and I became rather anxiously aware that after such disappointments they fell back upon me with a heavier weight. They did me the honour to think me most *their* form. They weren't romantic enough for the painters, and in those days there were few serious workers in black-and-white. Besides, they had an eye to the great job I had mentioned to them—they had secretly set their hearts on supplying the right essence for my pictorial vindication of our fine novelist. They knew that for this undertaking I should want no costume-effects, none of the frippery of past ages—that it was a case in which everything would be contemporary and satirical and presumably genteel. If I could work them into it their future would be assured, for the labour would of course be long and the occupation steady.

One day Mrs. Monarch came without her husband—she explained his absence by his having had to go to the City. While she sat there in her usual relaxed majesty there came at the door a knock which I immediately recognised as the subdued appeal of a model out of work. It was followed by the entrance of a young man whom I at once saw to be a foreigner and who proved in fact an Italian acquainted with no English word but my name, which he uttered in a way that made it seem to include all others. I hadn't then visited his country, nor was I proficient in his tongue; but as he was not so meanly constituted—what Italian is?—as to depend **only** on that member for expression he conveyed to me, in familiar but graceful mimicry, that he was in search of exactly the employment

in which the lady before me was engaged. I was not struck with him at first, and while I continued to draw I dropped few signs of interest or encouragement. He stood his ground however—not importunately, but with a dumb dog-like fidelity in his eyes that amounted to innocent impudence, the manner of a devoted servant—he might have been in the house for years—unjustly suspected. Suddenly it struck me that this very attitude and expression made a picture; whereupon I told him to sit down and wait till I should be free. There was another picture in the way he obeyed me, and I observed as I worked that there were others still in the way he looked wonderingly, with his head thrown back, about the high studio. He might have been crossing himself in Saint Peter's. Before I finished I said to myself "The fellow's a bankrupt orange-monger, but a treasure."

When Mrs. Monarch withdrew he passed across the room like a flash to open the door for her, standing there with the rapt pure gaze of the young Dante spellbound by the young Beatrice. As I never insisted, in such situations, on the blankness of the British domestic, I reflected that he had the making of a servant—and I needed one, but couldn't pay him to be only that—as well as of a model; in short I resolved to adopt my bright adventurer if he would agree to officiate in the double capacity. He jumped at my offer, and in the event my rashness—for I had really known nothing about him—wasn't brought home to me. He proved a sympathetic though a desultory ministrant, and had in a wonderful degree the *sentiment de la pose*.<sup>5</sup> It was uncultivated, instinctive, a part of the happy instinct that had guided him to my door and helped him to spell out my name on the card nailed to it. He had had no other introduction to me than a guess, from the shape of my high north window, seen outside, that my place was a studio and that as a studio it would contain an artist. He had wandered to England in search of fortune, like other itinerants, and had embarked, with a partner and a small green hand-cart, on the sale of penny ices. The ices had melted away and the partner had dissolved in their train. My young man wore tight yellow trousers with reddish stripes and his name was Oronte. He was sallow but fair, and when I put him into some old clothes of my own he looked like an Englishman. He was as good as Miss Churm, who could look, when requested, like an Italian.

#### IV

I thought Mrs. Monarch's face slightly convulsed when, on her coming back with her husband, she found Oronte installed. It was strange to have to recognise in a scrap of a lazzarone a competitor to her magnificent Major. It was she who scented danger first, for

5. Instinct for correct posing.

the Major was anecdotically unconscious. But Oronte gave us tea, with a hundred eager confusions—he had never been concerned in so queer a process—and I think she thought better of me for having at last an “establishment.” They saw a couple of drawings that I had made of the establishment, and Mrs. Monarch hinted that it never would have struck her he had sat for them. “Now the drawings you make from *us*, they look exactly like *us*,” she reminded me, smiling in triumph; and I recognised that this was indeed just their defect. When I drew the Monarchs I couldn’t anyhow get away from them—get into the character I wanted to represent; and I hadn’t the least desire my model should be discoverable in my picture. Miss Churm never was, and Mrs. Monarch thought I hid her, very properly, because she was vulgar; whereas if she was lost it was only as the dead who go to heaven are lost—in the gain of an angel the more.

By this time I had got a certain start with “Rutland Ramsey,” the first novel in the great projected series; that is I had produced a dozen drawings, several with the help of the Major and his wife, and I had sent them in for approval. My understanding with the publishers, as I have already hinted, had been that I was to be left to do my work, in this particular case, as I liked, with the whole book committed to me; but my connexion with the rest of the series was only contingent. There were moments when, frankly, it *was* a comfort to have the real thing under one’s hand; for there were characters in “Rutland Ramsay” that were very much like it. There were people presumably as erect as the Major and women of as good a fashion as Mrs. Monarch. There was a great deal of country-house life—treated, it is true, in a fine fanciful ironical generalised way—and there was a considerable implication of knickerbockers and kilts. There were certain things I had to settle at the outset; such things for instance as the exact appearance of the hero and the particular bloom and figure of the heroine. The author of course gave me a lead, but there was a margin for interpretation. I took the Monarchs into my confidence, I told them frankly what I was about, I mentioned my embarrassments and alternatives. “Oh take *him!*” Mrs. Monarch murmured sweetly, looking at her husband; and “What could you want better than my wife?” the Major enquired with the comfortable candour that now prevailed between us.

I wasn’t obliged to answer these remarks—I was only obliged to place my sitters. I wasn’t easy in mind, and I postponed a little timidly perhaps the solving of my question. The book was a large canvas, the other figures were numerous, and I worked off at *first* some of the episodes in which the hero and the heroine were not concerned. When once I had set *them* up I should have to stick

to them—I couldn't make my young man seven feet high in one place and five feet nine in another. I inclined on the whole to the latter measurement, though the Major more than once reminded me that *he* looked about as young as any one. It was indeed quite possible to arrange him, for the figure, so that it would have been difficult to detect his age. After the spontaneous Oronte had been with me a month, and after I had given him to understand several times over that his native exuberance would presently constitute an insurmountable barrier to our further intercourse, I waked to a sense of his heroic capacity. He was only five feet seven, but the remaining inches were latent. I tried him almost secretly at first, for I was really rather afraid of the judgment my other models would pass on such a choice. If they regarded Miss Churn as little better than a snare what would they think of the representation by a person so little the real thing as an Italian street-vendor of a protagonist formed by a public school?

If I went a little in fear of them it wasn't because they bullied me, because they had got an oppressive foothold, but because in their really pathetic decorum and mysteriously permanent newness they counted on me so intensely. I was therefore very glad when Jack Hawley came home: he was always of such good counsel. He painted badly himself, but there was no one like him for putting his finger on the place. He had been absent from England for a year; he had been somewhere—I don't remember where—to get a fresh eye. I was in a good deal of dread of any such organ, but we were old friends; he had been away for months and a sense of emptiness was creeping into my life. I hadn't dodged a missile for a year.

He came back with a fresh eye, but with the same old black velvet blouse, and the first evening he spent in my studio we smoked cigarettes till the small hours. He had done no work himself, he had only got the eye; so the field was clear for the production of my little things. He wanted to see what I had produced for the *Cheapside*, but he was disappointed in the exhibition. That at least seemed the meaning of two or three comprehensive groans which, as he lounged on my big divan, his leg folded under him, looking at my latest drawings, issued from his lips with the smoke of the cigarette.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked.

"What's the matter with *you*?"

"Nothing save that I'm mystified."

"You are indeed. You're quite off the hinge. What's the meaning of this new fad?" And he tossed me, with visible irreverence, a drawing in which I happened to have depicted both my elegant models. I asked if he didn't think it good, and he replied that it

struck him as execrable, given the sort of thing I had always represented myself to him as wishing to arrive at; but I let that pass—I was so anxious to see exactly what he meant. The two figures in the picture looked colossal, but I supposed this was *not* what he meant, inasmuch as, for aught he knew to the contrary, I might have been trying for some such effect. I maintained that I was working exactly in the same way as when he last had done me the honour to tell me I might do something some day. “Well, there’s a screw loose somewhere,” he answered; “wait a bit and I’ll discover it.” I depended upon him to do so: where else was the fresh eye? But he produced at last nothing more luminous than “I don’t know—I don’t like your types.” This was lame for a critic who had never consented to discuss with me anything but the question of execution, the direction of strokes and the mystery of values.

“In the drawings you’ve been looking at I think my types are very handsome.”

“Oh they won’t do!”

“I’ve been working with new models.”

“I see you have. *They* won’t do.”

“Are you very sure of that?”

“Absolutely—they’re stupid.”

“You mean *I* am—for I ought to get round that.”

“You *can’t*—with such people. Who are they?”

I told him, so far as was necessary, and he concluded heartlessly: “*Ce sont des gens qu’il faut mettre à la porte.*”<sup>6</sup>

“You’ve never seen them; they’re awfully good”—I flew to their defence.

“Not seen them? Why all this recent work of yours drops to pieces with them. It’s all I want to see of them.”

“No one else has said anything against it—the *Cheapside* people are pleased.”

“Every one else is an ass, and the *Cheapside* people the biggest asses of all. Come, don’t pretend at this time of day to have pretty illusions about the public, especially about publishers and editors. It’s not for *such* animals you work—it’s for those who know, *color che sanno*;<sup>7</sup> so keep straight for *me* if you can’t keep straight for yourself. There was a certain sort of thing you used to try for—and a very good thing it was. But this twaddle isn’t *in* it.” When I talked with Hawley later about “Rutland Ramsay” and its possible successors he declared that I must get back into my boat again or I should go to the bottom. His voice in short was the voice of warning.

I noted the warning, but I didn’t turn my friends out of doors.

6. They are the kind of people one should get rid of.

7. Dante’s reference to Aristotle: “*Vidi*

*il Maestro di color che sanno*” [“I saw the master of those who know”], *Inferno*, iv, 131.

They bored me a good deal; but the very fact that they bored me admonished me not to sacrifice them—if there was anything to be done with them—simply to irritation. As I look back at this phase they seem to me to have pervaded my life not a little. I have a vision of them as most of the time in my studio, seated against the wall on an old velvet bench to be out of the way, and resembling the while a pair of patient courtiers in a royal ante-chamber. I'm convinced that during the coldest weeks of the winter they held their ground because it saved them fire. Their newness was losing its gloss, and it was impossible not to feel them objects of charity. Whenever Miss Churm arrived they went away, and after I was fairly launched in "*Rutland Ramsay*" Miss Churm arrived pretty often. They managed to express to me tacitly that they supposed I wanted her for the low life of the book, and I let them suppose it, since they had attempted to study the work—it was lying about the studio—without discovering that it dealt only with the highest circles. They had dipped into the most brilliant of our novelists without deciphering many passages. I still took an hour from them, now and again, in spite of Jack Hawley's warning: it would be time enough to dismiss them, if dismissal should be necessary, when the rigour of the season was over. Hawley had made their acquaintance—he had met them at my fireside—and thought them a ridiculous pair. Learning that he was a painter they tried to approach him, to show him too that they were the real thing; but he looked at them, across the big room, as if they were miles away: they were a compendium of everything he most objected to in the social system of his country. Such people as that, all convention and patent-leather, with ejaculations that stopped conversation, had no business in a studio. A studio was a place to learn to see, and how could you see through a pair of feather-beds?

The main inconvenience I suffered at their hands was that at first I was shy of letting it break upon them that my artful little servant had begun to sit to me for "*Rutland Ramsay*." They knew I had been odd enough—they were prepared by this time to allow oddity to artists—to pick a foreign vagabond out of the streets when I might have had a person with whiskers and credentials; but it was some time before they learned how high I rated his accomplishments. They found him in an attitude more than once, but they never doubted I was doing him as an organ-grinder. There were several things they never guessed, and one of them was that for a striking scene in the novel, in which a footman briefly figured, it occurred to me to make use of Major Monarch as the menial. I kept putting this off, I didn't like to ask him to don the livery—besides the difficulty of finding a livery to fit him. At last, one day

late in the winter, when I was at work on the despised Oronte, who caught one's idea on the wing, and was in the glow of feeling myself go very straight, they came in, the Major and his wife, with their society laugh about nothing (there was less and less to laugh at); came in like country-callers—they always reminded me of that—who have walked across the park after church and are presently persuaded to stay to luncheon. Luncheon was over, but they could stay to tea—I knew they wanted it. The fit was on me, however, and I couldn't let my ardour cool and my work wait, with the fading daylight, while my model prepared it. So I asked Mrs. Monarch if she would mind laying it out—a request which for an instant brought all the blood to her face. Her eyes were on her husband's for a second, and some mute telegraphy passed between them. Their folly was over the next instant; his cheerful shrewdness put an end to it. So far from pitying their wounded pride, I must add, I was moved to give it as complete a lesson as I could. They bustled about together and got out the cups and saucers and made the kettle boil. I know they felt as if they were waiting on my servant, and when the tea was prepared I said: "He'll have a cup, please—he's tired." Mrs. Monarch brought him one where he stood, and he took it from her as if he had been a gentleman at a party squeezing a crush-hat with an elbow.

Then it came over me that she had made a great effort for me—made it with a kind of nobleness—and that I owed her a compensation. Each time I saw her after this I wondered what the compensation could be. I couldn't go on doing the wrong thing to oblige them. Oh it *was* the wrong thing, the stamp of the work for which they sat—Hawley was not the only person to say it now. I sent in a large number of the drawings I had made for "Rutland Ramsay," and I received a warning that was more to the point than Hawley's. The artistic adviser of the house for which I was working was of opinion that many of my illustrations were not what had been looked for. Most of these illustrations were the subjects in which the Monarchs had figured. Without going into the question of what *had* been looked for, I had to face the fact that at this rate I shouldn't get the other books to do. I hurled myself in despair on Miss Churm—I put her through all her paces. I not only adopted Oronte publicly as my hero, but one morning when the Major looked in to see if I didn't require him to finish a *Cheapside* figure for which he had begun to sit the week before, I told him I had changed my mind—I'd do the drawing from my man. At this my visitor turned pale and stood looking at me. "Is *he* your idea of an English gentleman?" he asked.

I was disappointed, I was nervous, I wanted to get on with my work; so I replied with irritation: "Oh my dear Major—I can't be

ruined for you!"

It was a horrid speech, but he stood another moment—after which, without a word, he quitted the studio. I drew a long breath, for I said to myself that I shouldn't see him again. I hadn't told him definitely that I was in danger of having my work rejected, but I was vexed at his not having felt the catastrophe in the air, read with me the moral of our fruitless collaboration, the lesson that in the deceptive atmosphere of art even the highest respectability may fail of being plastic.

I didn't owe my friends money, but I did see them again. They reappeared together three days later, and, given all the other facts, there was something tragic in that one. It was a clear proof they could find nothing else in life to do. They had threshed the matter out in a dismal conference—they had digested the bad news that they were not in for the series. If they weren't useful to me even for the *Cheapside* their function seemed difficult to determine, and I could only judge at first that they had come, forgivingly, decorously, to take a last leave. This made me rejoice in secret that I had little leisure for a scene; for I had placed both my other models in position together and I was pegging away at a drawing from which I hoped to derive glory. It had been suggested by the passage in which Rutland Ramsay, drawing up a chair to Artemisia's piano-stool, says extraordinary things to her while she ostensibly fingers out a difficult piece of music. I had done Miss Churm at the piano before—it was an attitude in which she knew how to take on an absolutely poetic grace. I wished the two figures to "compose" together with intensity, and my little Italian had entered perfectly into my conception. The pair were vividly before me, the piano had been pulled out; it was a charming show of blended youth and murmured love, which I had only to catch and keep. My visitors stood and looked at it, and I was friendly to them over my shoulder.

They made no response, but I was used to silent company and went on with my work, only a little disconcerted—even though exhilarated by the sense that *this* was at least the ideal thing—at not having got rid of them after all. Presently I heard Mrs. Monarch's sweet voice beside or rather above me: "I wish her hair were a little better done." I looked up and she was staring with a strange fixedness at Miss Churm, whose back was turned to her. "Do you mind my just touching it?" she went on—a question which made me spring up for an instant as with the instinctive fear that she might do the young lady a harm. But she quieted me with a glance I shall never forget—I confess I should like to have been able to paint *that*—and went for a moment to my model. She spoke to her softly, laying a hand on her shoulder and bending



over her; and as the girl, understanding, gratefully assented, she disposed her rough curls, with a few quick passes, in such a way as to make Miss Churm's head twice as charming. It was one of the most heroic personal services I've ever seen rendered. Then Mrs. Monarch turned away with a low sigh and, looking about her as if for something to do, stooped to the floor with a noble humility and picked up a dirty rag that had dropped out of my paint-box.

The Major meanwhile had also been looking for something to do, and, wandering to the other end of the studio, saw before him my breakfast-things neglected, unremoved. "I say, can't I be useful *here*?" he called out to me with an irrepressible quaver. I assented with a laugh that I fear was awkward, and for the next ten minutes, while I worked, I heard the light clatter of china and the tinkle of spoons and glass. Mrs. Monarch assisted her husband—they washed up my crockery, they put it away. They wandered off into my little scullery, and I afterwards found that they had cleaned my knives and that my slender stock of plate had an unprecedented surface. When it came over me, the latent eloquence of what they were doing, I confess that my drawing was blurred for a moment—the picture swam. They had accepted their failure, but they couldn't accept their fate. They had bowed their heads in bewilderment to the perverse and cruel law in virtue of which the real thing could be so much less precious than the unreal; but they didn't want to starve. If my servants were my models, then my models might be my servants. They would reverse the parts—the others would sit for the ladies and gentlemen and *they* would do the work. They would still be in the studio—it was an intense dumb appeal to me not to turn them out. "Take us on," they wanted to say—"we'll do *anything*."

My pencil dropped from my hand; my sitting was spoiled and I got rid of my sitters, who were also evidently rather mystified and awestruck. Then, alone with the Major and his wife I had a most uncomfortable moment. He put their prayer into a single sentence: "I say, you know—just let *us* do for you, can't you?" I couldn't—it was dreadful to see them emptying my slops; but I pretended I could, to oblige them, for about a week. Then I gave them a sum of money to go away, and I never saw them again. I obtained the remaining books, but my friend Hawley repeats that Major and Mrs. Monarch did me a permanent harm, got me into false ways. If it be true I'm content to have paid the price—for the memory.

The Art of Fiction<sup>8</sup>

I should not have affixed so comprehensive a title to these few remarks, necessarily wanting in any completeness upon a subject the full consideration of which would carry us far, did I not seem to discover a pretext for my temerity in the interesting pamphlet lately published under this name by Mr. Walter Besant.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Besant's lecture at the Royal Institution—the original form of his pamphlet—appears to indicate that many persons are interested in the art of fiction, and are not indifferent to such remarks, as those who practice it may attempt to make about it. I am therefore anxious not to lose the benefit of this favorable association, and to edge in a few words under cover of the attention which Mr. Besant is sure to have excited. There is something very encouraging in his having put into form certain of his ideas on the mystery of story-telling.

It is a proof of life and curiosity—curiosity on the part of the brotherhood of novelists as well as on the part of their readers. Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call *discutable*.<sup>1</sup> It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison. I do not say it was necessarily the worse for that: it would take much more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel as Dickens and Thackeray (for instance) saw it had any taint of incompleteness. It was, however, *naïf* (if I may help myself out with another French word); and evidently if it be destined to suffer in any way for having lost its *naïveté* it has now an idea of making sure of the corresponding advantages. During the period I have alluded to there was a comfortable, good-humored feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that our only business with it could be to swallow it. But within a year or two, for some reason or other, there have been signs of returning animation—the era of discussion would appear to have been to a certain extent opened. Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; and there is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to say about it, and has no reason to give for practice or preference, though they may be times of honor, are not times of development—are times, possibly even, a little of dullness. The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the theory too is interesting; and

8. Originally published in *Longman's Magazine* for September, 1884; included in *Partial Portraits* (1888), the source of the present text.

9. English novelist and critic (1836–1901).

1. Debatable.

though there is a great deal of the latter without the former I suspect there has never been a genuine success that has not had a latent core of conviction. Discussion, suggestion, formulation, these things are fertilizing when they are frank and sincere. Mr. Besant has set an excellent example in saying what he thinks, for his part, about the way in which fiction should be written, as well as about the way in which it should be published; for his view of the "art," carried on into an appendix, covers that too. Other laborers in the same field will doubtless take up the argument, they will give it the light of their experience, and the effect will surely be to make our interest in the novel a little more what it had for some time threatened to fail to be—a serious, active, inquiring interest, under protection of which this delightful study may, in moments of confidence, venture to say a little more what it thinks of itself.

It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so. The old superstition about fiction being "wicked" has doubtless died out in England; but the spirit of it lingers in a certain oblique regard directed toward any story which does not more or less admit that it is only a joke. Even the most jocular novel feels in some degree the weight of the proscription that was formerly directed against literary levity: the jocularity does not always succeed in passing for orthodoxy. It is still expected, though perhaps people are ashamed to say it, that a production which is after all only a "make-believe" (for what else is a "story"?) shall be in some degree apologetic—shall renounce the pretension of attempting really to represent life. This, of course, any sensible, wide-awake story declines to do, for it quickly perceives that the tolerance granted to it on such a condition is only an attempt to stifle it disguised in the form of generosity. The old evangelical hostility to the novel, which was as explicit as it was narrow, and which regarded it as little less favorable to our immortal part than a stage play, was in reality far less insulting. The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life. When it relinquishes this attempt, the same attempt that we see on the canvas of the painter, it will have arrived at a very strange pass. It is not expected of the picture that it will make itself humble in order to be forgiven; and the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honor of one is the honor of another. The Mahometans think a picture an unholy thing, but it is a long time since any Christian did, and it is therefore the more odd that in the Christian mind the traces (dissimulated though they may be) of a suspicion of the sister art

should linger to this day. The only effectual way to lay it to rest is to emphasize the analogy to which I just alluded—to insist on the fact that as the picture is reality, so the novel is history. That is the only general description (which does it justice) that we may give of the novel. But history also is allowed to represent life; it is not, any more than painting, expected to apologize. The subject matter of fiction is stored up likewise in documents and records, and if it will not give itself away, as they say in California, it must speak with assurance, with the tone of the historian. Certain accomplished novelists have a habit of giving themselves away which must often bring tears to the eyes of people who take their fiction seriously. I was lately struck, in reading over many pages of Anthony Trollope,<sup>2</sup> with his want of discretion in this particular. In a digression, a parenthesis or an aside, he concedes to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only “making believe.” He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime; it is what I mean by the attitude of apology, and it shocks me every whit as much in Trollope as it would have shocked me in Gibbon or Macaulay.<sup>3</sup> It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth (the truth, of course I mean, that he assumes, the premises that we must grant him, whatever they may be) than the historian, and in doing so it deprives him at a stroke of all his standing room. To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer, and the only difference that I can see is, in proportion as he succeeds, to the honor of the novelist, consisting as it does in his having more difficulty in collecting his evidence, which is so far from being purely literary. It seems to me to give him a great character, the fact that he has at once so much in common with the philosopher and the painter; this double analogy is a magnificent heritage.

It is of all this evidently that Mr. Besant is full when he insists upon the fact that fiction is one of the *fine arts*, deserving in its turn of all the honors and emoluments that have hitherto been reserved for the successful profession of music, poetry, painting, architecture. It is impossible to insist too much on so important a truth, and the place that Mr. Besant demands for the work of the novelist may be represented, a trifle less abstractly, by saying that he demands not only that it shall be reputed artistic, but that it shall be reputed very artistic indeed. It is excellent that he should have struck this note, for his doing so indicates that there was need of it, that his proposition may be to many people a novelty. One rubs one's eyes at the thought; but the rest of Mr. Besant's

2. English novelist (1815–1882).

3. English historians.

essay confirms the revelation. I suspect in truth that it would be possible to confirm it still further, and that one would not be far wrong in saying that in addition to the people to whom it has never occurred that a novel ought to be artistic, there are a great many others who, if this principle were urged upon them, would be filled with an indefinable mistrust. They would find it difficult to explain their repugnance, but it would operate strongly to put them on their guard. "Art," in our Protestant communities, where so many things have got so strangely twisted about, is supposed in certain circles to have some vaguely injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration, who let it weigh in the balance. It is assumed to be opposed in some mysterious manner to morality, to amusement, to instruction. When it is embodied in the work of the painter (the sculptor is another affair!) you know what it is: it stands there before you, in the honesty of pink and green and a gilt frame; you can see the worst of it at a glance, and you can be on your *guard*. But when it is introduced into literature it becomes more insidious—there is danger of its hurting you before you know it. Literature should be either instructive or amusing, and there is in many minds an impression that these artistic preoccupations, the search for form, contribute to neither end, interfere indeed with both. They are too frivolous to be edifying, and too serious to be diverting; and they are moreover priggish and paradoxical and superfluous. That, I think, represents the manner in which the latent thought of many people who read novels as an exercise in skipping would explain itself if it were to become articulate. They would argue, of course, that a novel ought to be "good," but they would interpret this term in a fashion of their own, which indeed would vary considerably from one critic to another. One would say that being good means representing virtuous and aspiring characters, placed in prominent positions; another would say that it depends on a "happy ending," on a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks. Another still would say that it means being full of incident and movement, so that we shall wish to jump ahead, to see who was the mysterious stranger, and if the stolen will was ever found, and shall not be distracted from this pleasure by any tiresome analysis or "description." But they would all agree that the "artistic" idea would spoil some of their fun. One would hold it accountable for all the description, another would see it revealed in the absence of sympathy. Its hostility to a happy ending would be evident, and it might even in some cases render any ending at all impossible. The "ending" of a novel is, for many persons, like that of a good dinner, a course of dessert and ices, and the artist in fiction is regarded as a sort of

meddlesome doctor who forbids agreeable aftertastes. It is therefore true that this conception of Mr. Besant's of the novel as a superior form encounters not only a negative but a positive indifference. It matters little that as a work of art it should really be as little or as much of its essence to supply happy endings, sympathetic characters, and an objective tone, as if it were a work of mechanics: the association of ideas, however incongruous, might easily be too much for it if an eloquent voice were not sometimes raised to call attention to the fact that it is at once as free and as serious a branch of literature as any other.

Certainly this might sometimes be doubted in presence of the enormous number of works of fiction that appeal to the credulity of our generation, for it might easily seem that there could be no great character in a commodity so quickly and easily produced. It must be admitted that good novels are much compromised by bad ones, and that the field at large suffers discredit from overcrowding. I think, however, that this injury is only superficial, and that the superabundance of written fiction proves nothing against the principle itself. It has been vulgarized, like all other kinds of literature, like everything else today, and it has proved more than some kinds accessible to vulgarization. But there is as much difference as there ever was between a good novel and a bad one: the bad is swept with all the daubed canvases and spoiled marble into some unvisited limbo, or infinite rubbish yard beneath the back windows of the world, and the good subsists and emits its light and stimulates our desire for perfection. As I shall take the liberty of making but a single criticism of Mr. Besant, whose tone is so full of the love of his art, I may as well have done with it at once. He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be. To indicate the danger of such an error as that has been the purpose of these few pages; to suggest that certain traditions on the subject, applied *a priori*, have already had much to answer for, and that the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. That general responsibility rests upon it, but it is the only one I can think of. The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable, and such as can only suffer from being marked out or fenced in by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, con-

stitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say. The tracing of a line to be followed, of a tone to be taken, of a form to be filled out, is a limitation of that freedom and a suppression of the very thing that we are most curious about. The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact: then the author's choice has been made, his standard has been indicated; then we can follow lines and directions and compare tones and resemblances. Then in a word we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures, we can estimate quality, we can apply the test of execution. The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant—no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes. Here it is especially that he works, step by step, like his brother of the brush, of whom we may always say that he has painted his picture in a manner best known to himself. His manner is his secret, not necessarily a jealous one. He cannot disclose it as a general thing if he would; he would be at a loss to teach it to others. I say this with a due recollection of having insisted on the community of method of the artist who paints a picture and the artist who writes a novel. The painter is able to teach the rudiments of his practice, and it is possible, from the study of good work (granted the aptitude), both to learn how to paint and to learn how to write. Yet it remains true, without injury to the *rapprochement*,<sup>4</sup> that the literary artist would be obliged to say to his pupil much more than the other, "Ah, well, you must do it as you can!" It is a question of degree, a matter of delicacy. If there are exact sciences, there are also exact arts, and the grammar of painting is so much more definite that it makes the difference.

I ought to add, however, that if Mr. Besant says at the beginning of his essay that the "laws of fiction may be laid down and taught with as much precision and exactness as the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion," he mitigates what might appear to be an extravagance by applying his remark to "general" laws, and by expressing most of these rules in a manner with which it would certainly be unaccommodating to disagree. That the novelist must write from his experience, that his "characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life"; that "a young lady brought up in a quiet country village should avoid descriptions of garrison life," and "a writer whose friends and personal experiences belong to the lower middle class should carefully avoid introducing his characters into society"; that one should enter one's notes in a common-place

book; that one's figures should be clear in outline; that making them clear by some trick of speech or of carriage is a bad method, and "describing them at length" is a worse one; that English fiction should have a "conscious moral purpose"; that "it is almost impossible to estimate too highly the value of careful workmanship—that is, of style"; that "the most important point of all is the story," that "the story is everything": these are principles with most of which it is surely impossible not to sympathize. That remark about the lower middle-class writer and his knowing his place is perhaps rather chilling; but for the rest I should find it difficult to dissent from any one of these recommendations. At the same time, I should find it difficult positively to assent to them, with the exception, perhaps, of the injunction as to entering one's notes in a commonplace book. They scarcely seem to me to have the quality that Mr. Besant attributes to the rules of the novelist—the "precision and exactness" of "the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion." They are suggestive, they are even inspiring, but they are not exact, though they are doubtless as much so as the case admits of: which is a proof of that liberty of interpretation for which I just contended. For the value of these different injunctions—so beautiful and so vague—is wholly in the meaning one attaches to them. The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix. The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber<sup>5</sup> is a very delicate shade; it is a reality so colored by the author's vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model: one would expose one's self to some very embarrassing questions on the part of a pupil. It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality; but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being. Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odor of it, and others have not; as for telling you in advance how your nosegay should be composed, that is another affair. It is equally excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience; to our suppositious aspirant such a declaration might savor of mockery. What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative—much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius—it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. The young lady living in a

5. Character in Dickens' *David Copperfield*.



village has only to be a damsel upon whom nothing is lost to make it quite unfair (as it seems to me) to declare to her that she shall have nothing to say about the military. Greater miracles have been seen than that, imagination assisting, she should speak the truth about some of these gentlemen. I remember an English novelist, a woman of genius, telling me that she was much commended for the impression she had managed to give in one of her tales of the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth. She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being, she had been congratulated on her peculiar opportunities. These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase, passed an open door where, in the household of a *pasteur*,<sup>6</sup> some of the young Protestants were seated at table round a finished meal. The glimpse made a picture; it lasted only a moment, but that moment was experience. She had got her direct personal impression, and she turned out her type. She knew what youth was, and what Protestantism; she also had the advantage of having seen what it was to be French, so that she converted these ideas into a concrete image and produced a reality. Above all, however, she was blessed with the faculty which when you give it an inch takes an ell,<sup>7</sup> and which for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social scale. The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country and in town, and in the most differing stages of education. If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions *are* experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe. Therefore, if I should certainly say to a novice, "Write from experience and experience only," I should feel that this was rather a tantalizing monition if I were not careful immediately to add, "Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!"

I am far from intending by this to minimize the importance of exactness—of truth of detail. One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits (including that conscious moral purpose of which Mr. Besant speaks) helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there, they are all as nothing, and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success,

6. Pastor.

7. A unit of measure of cloth, usually forty-five inches.

the study of this exquisite process, form, to my taste, the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. They are his inspiration, his despair, his reward, his torment, his delight. It is here in very truth that he competes with life; it is here that he competes with his brother the painter in *his* attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the color, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle. It is in regard to this that Mr. Besant is well inspired when he bids him take notes. He cannot possibly take too many, he cannot possibly take enough. All life solicits him, and to "render" the simplest surface, to produce the most momentary illusion, is a very complicated business. His case would be easier, and the rule would be more exact, if Mr. Besant had been able to tell him what notes to take. But this, I fear, he can never learn in any manual; it is the business of his life. He has to take a great many in order to select a few, he has to work them up as he can, and even the guides and philosophers who might have most to say to him must leave him alone when it comes to the application of precepts, as we leave the painter in communion with his palette. That his characters "must be clear in outline," as Mr. Besant says—he feels that down to his boots; but how he shall make them so is a secret between his good angel and himself. It would be absurdly simple if he could be taught that a great deal of "description" would make them so, or that on the contrary the absence of description and the cultivation of dialogue, or the absence of dialogue and the multiplication of "incident," would rescue him from his difficulties. Nothing, for instance, is more possible than that he be of a turn of mind for which this odd, literal opposition of description and dialogue, incident and description, has little meaning and light. People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression. I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, or an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art—that of being illustrative. A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts. The critic who over the close texture of a finished work shall pretend to trace a geography of items will mark some frontiers as artificial, I fear, as any that have been known to history. There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and

the novel of incident which must have cost many a smile to the intending fabulist who was keen about his work. It appears to me as little to the point as the equally celebrated distinction between the novel and the romance—to answer as little to any reality. There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character. If you say you don't see it (character in *that—allons donc!*<sup>18</sup>), this is exactly what the artist who has reasons of his own for thinking he *does* see it undertakes to show you. When a young man makes up his mind that he has not faith enough after all to enter the church as he intended, that is an incident, though you may not hurry to the end of the chapter to see whether perhaps he doesn't change once more. I do not say that these are extraordinary or startling incidents. I do not pretend to estimate the degree of interest proceeding from them, for this will depend upon the skill of the painter. It sounds almost puerile to say that some incidents are intrinsically much more important than others, and I need not take this precaution after having professed my sympathy for the major ones in remarking that the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has it not.

The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character—these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional queer predicaments, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is of course that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction. The case is the same with another shadowy category which Mr. Besant apparently is disposed to set up—that of the “modern English novel”; unless indeed it be that in this matter he has fallen into an accidental confusion of standpoints. It is not quite clear whether he intends the remarks in which he alludes to it to be didactic or historical. It is as difficult to suppose a person intending to write a modern English as to suppose him writing an ancient

English novel: that is a label which begs the question. One writes the novel, one paints the picture, of one's language and of one's time, and calling it modern English will not, alas! make the difficult task any easier. No more, unfortunately, will calling this or that work of one's fellow artist a romance—unless it be, of course, simply for the pleasantness of the thing, as for instance when Hawthorne gave this heading to his story of *Blithedale*.<sup>9</sup> The French, who have brought the theory of fiction to remarkable completeness, have but one name for the novel, and have not attempted smaller things in it, that I can see, for that. I can think of no obligation to which the "romancer" would not be held equally with the novelist; the standard of execution is equally high for each. Of course it is of execution that we are talking—that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention. This is perhaps too often lost sight of, only to produce interminable confusions and cross purposes. We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*:<sup>1</sup> our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it. Naturally I do not mean that we are bound to like it or find it interesting: in case we do not, our course is perfectly simple—to let it alone. We may believe that of a certain idea even the most sincere novelist can make nothing at all, and the event may perfectly justify our belief; but the failure will have been a failure to execute, and it is in the execution that the fatal weakness is recorded. If we pretend to respect the artist at all, we must allow him his freedom of choice, in the face, in particular cases, of innumerable presumptions that the choice will not fructify. Art derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions, and some of the most interesting experiments of which it is capable are hidden in the bosom of common things. Gustave Flaubert has written a story<sup>2</sup> about the devotion of a servant girl to a parrot, and the production, highly finished as it is, cannot on the whole be called a success. We are perfectly free to find it flat, but I think it might have been interesting; and I, for my part, am extremely glad he should have written it; it is a contribution to our knowledge of what can be done—or what cannot. Ivan Turgénieff has written a tale<sup>3</sup> about a deaf and dumb serf and a lap dog, and the thing is touching, loving, a little masterpiece. He struck the note of life where Gustave Flaubert missed it—he flew in the face of a presumption and achieved a victory.

Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of "liking" a work of art or not liking it: the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test. I mention this to guard myself from the accusation of intimating that the idea, the subject, of a novel or a picture, does not matter. It mat-

9. *The Blithedale Romance*.

1. Given starting point.

2. "A Simple Heart."

3. "Mumu."

ters, to my sense, in the highest degree, and if I might put up a prayer it would be that artists should select none but the richest. Some, as I have already hastened to admit, are much more remunerative than others, and it would be a world happily arranged in which persons intending to treat them should be exempt from confusions and mistakes. This fortunate condition will arrive only, I fear, on the same day that critics become purged from error. Meanwhile, I repeat, we do not judge the artist with fairness unless we say to him, "Oh, I grant you your starting point, because if I did not I should seem to prescribe to you, and heaven forbid I should take that responsibility. If I pretend to tell you what you must not take, you will call upon me to tell you then what you must take; in which case I shall be prettily caught. Moreover, it isn't till I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you. I have the standard, the pitch; I have no right to tamper with your flute and then criticize your music. Of course I may not care for your idea at all; I may think it silly, or stale, or unclean; in which case I wash my hands of you altogether. I may content myself with believing that you will not have succeeded in being interesting, but I shall, of course, not attempt to demonstrate it, and you will be as indifferent to me as I am to you. I needn't remind you that there are all sorts of tastes: who can know it better? Some people, for excellent reasons, don't like to read about carpenters; others, for reasons even better, don't like to read about courtesans. Many object to Americans. Others (I believe they are mainly editors and publishers) won't look at Italians. Some readers don't like quiet subjects; others don't like bustling ones. Some enjoy a complete illusion, others the consciousness of large concessions. They choose their novels accordingly, and if they don't care about your idea they won't, *a fortiori*,<sup>4</sup> care about your treatment."

So that it comes back very quickly, as I have said, to the liking: in spite of M. Zola,<sup>5</sup> who reasons less powerfully than he represents, and who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like. I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that people *ought* to like or to dislike. Selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience. As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it. This closeness of relation is what we should never forget in talking of the effort of the novel. Many people speak of it as a factitious, artificial form, a product of ingenuity, the business of which is to alter and arrange the things that surround us, to translate

4. All the more.

5. Émile Zola (1840-1902), novelist

and author of *Le roman expérimental*, which explains his theories of fiction.

them into conventional, traditional molds. This, however, is a view of the matter which carries us but a very short way, condemns the art to an eternal repetition of a few familiar *clichés*, cuts short its development, and leads us straight up to a dead wall. Catching the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life, that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps Fiction upon her feet. In proportion as in what she offers us we see life *without* rearrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth; in proportion as we see it *with* rearrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute, a compromise and convention. It is not uncommon to hear an extraordinary assurance of remark in regard to this matter of rearranging, which is often spoken of as if it were the last word of art. Mr. Besant seems to me in danger of falling into the great error with his rather unguarded talk about "selection." Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive. For many people art means rose-colored window-panes, and selection means picking a bouquet for Mrs. Grundy.<sup>6</sup> They will tell you glibly that artistic considerations have nothing to do with the disagreeable, with the ugly; they will rattle off shallow commonplaces about the province of art and the limits of art till you are moved to some wonder in return as to the province and the limits of ignorance. It appears to me that no one can ever have made a seriously artistic attempt without becoming conscious of an immense increase—a kind of revelation—of freedom. One perceives in that case—by the light of a heavenly ray—that the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision. As Mr. Besant so justly intimates, it is all experience. That is a sufficient answer to those who maintain that it must not touch the sad things of life, who stick into its divine unconscious bosom little prohibitory inscriptions on the end of sticks, such as we see in public gardens—"It is forbidden to walk on the grass; it is forbidden to touch the flowers; it is not allowed to introduce dogs or to remain after dark; it is requested to keep to the right." The young aspirant in the line of fiction whom we continue to imagine will do nothing without taste, for in that case his freedom would be of little use to him; but the first advantage of his taste will be to reveal to him the absurdity of the little sticks and tickets. If he have taste, I must add, of course he will have ingenuity, and my disrespectful reference to that quality just now was not meant to imply that it is useless in fiction. But it is only a secondary aid; the first is a capacity for receiving straight impressions.

Mr. Besant has some remarks on the question of "the story" which I shall not attempt to criticize, though they seem to me to contain

6. The stock personification of prudery.  
Cf. Thomas Morton's *Speed the Plough*

(1798), a comedy in which Mrs. Grundy is a character.

a singular ambiguity, because I do not think I understand them. I cannot see what is meant by talking as if there were a part of a novel which is the story and part of it which for mystical reasons is not—unless indeed the distinction be made in a sense in which it is difficult to suppose that anyone should attempt to convey anything. “The story,” if it represents anything, represents the subject, the idea, the *donnée* of the novel; and there is surely no “school”—Mr. Besant speaks of a school—which urges that a novel should be all treatment and no subject. There must assuredly be something to treat; every school is intimately conscious of that. This sense of the story being the idea, the starting point, of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole; and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, so that every word and every punctuation point contribute directly to the expression, in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath. The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread. Mr. Besant is not the only critic who may be observed to have spoken as if there were certain things in life which constitute stories, and certain others which do not. I find the same odd implications in an entertaining article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, devoted, as it happens, to Mr. Besant’s lecture. “The story is the thing!” says this graceful writer, as if with a tone of opposition to some other idea. I should think it was, as every painter who, as the time for “sending in” his picture looms in the distance, finds himself still in quest of a subject—as every belated artist not fixed about his theme will heartily agree. There are some subjects which speak to us and others which do not, but he would be a clever man who should undertake to give a rule—an index expurgatorius<sup>7</sup>—by which the story and the no-story should be known apart. It is impossible (to me at least) to imagine any such rule which shall not be altogether arbitrary. The writer in the *Pall Mall* opposes the delightful (as I suppose) novel of *Margot la Balafrée*<sup>8</sup> to certain tales in which “Bostonian nymphs” appear to have “rejected English dukes for psychological reasons.” I am not acquainted with the romance just designated, and can scarcely forgive the *Pall Mall* critic for not mentioning the name of the author, but the title appears to refer to a lady who may have received a scar<sup>9</sup> in some heroic adventure. I am inconsolable at not being acquainted with this episode, but am utterly at a loss to see why it is a story when the rejection (or

7. The allusion is to the Catholic “Index” of forbidden books.

8. A novel, published in 1884, by Fortuné Du Boisgobey.

9. *Balafrée* means “lady with a scar.”

acceptance) of a duke is not, and why a reason, psychological or other, is not a subject when a cicatrix<sup>1</sup> is. They are all particles of the multitudinous life with which the novel deals, and surely no dogma which pretends to make it lawful to touch the one and unlawful to touch the other will stand for a moment on its feet. It is the special picture that must stand or fall, according as it seem to possess truth or to lack it. Mr. Besant does not, to my sense, light up the subject by intimating that a story must, under penalty of not being a story, consist of "adventures." Why of adventures more than of green spectacles?<sup>2</sup> He mentions a category of impossible things, and among them he places "fiction without adventure." Why without adventure, more than without matrimony, or celibacy, or parturition, or cholera, or hydropathy,<sup>3</sup> or Jansenism?<sup>4</sup> This seems to me to bring the novel back to the hapless little role of being an artificial, ingenious thing—bring it down from its large, free character of an immense and exquisite correspondence with life. And what is adventure, when it comes to that, and by what sign is the listening pupil to recognize it? It is an adventure—an immense one—for me to write this little article; and for a Bostonian nymph to reject an English duke is an adventure only less stirring, I should say, than for an English duke to be rejected by a Bostonian nymph. I see dramas within dramas in that, and innumerable points of view. A psychological reason is, to my imagination, an object adorably pictorial; to catch the tint of its complexion—I feel as if that idea might inspire one to Titianesque<sup>5</sup> efforts. There are few things more exciting to me, in short, than a psychological reason, and yet, I protest, the novel seems to me the most magnificent form of art. I have just been reading, at the same time, the delightful story of *Treasure Island*, by Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson and, in a manner less consecutive, the last tale from M. Edmond de Goncourt, which is entitled *Chérie*. One of these works treats of murders, mysteries, islands of dreadful renown, hairbreadth escapes, miraculous coincidences, and buried doubloons. The other treats of a little French girl who lived in a fine house in Paris, and died of wounded sensibility because no one would marry her. I call *Treasure Island* delightful because it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts; and I venture to bestow no epithet upon *Chérie*, which strikes me as having failed deplorably in what it attempts—that is, in tracing the development of the moral consciousness of a child. But one of these productions strikes me as exactly as much of a novel as the other, and as having a "story" quite as much. The moral

1. Scar.

2. Cf. Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

3. Water therapy.

4. Heretical doctrines of Cornelius Jansen (1585–1638), Catholic bishop of Ypres.

5. The allusion is to the sixteenth-century Venetian painter.



consciousness of a child is as much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish Main, and the one sort of geography seems to me to have those "surprises" of which Mr. Besant speaks quite as much as the other. For myself (since it comes back in the last resort, as I say, to the preference of the individual), the picture of the child's experience has the advantage that I can at successive steps (an immense luxury, near to the "sensual pleasure" of which Mr. Besant's critic in the *Pall Mall* speaks) say Yes or No, as it may be, to what the artist puts before me. I have been a child in fact, but I have been on a quest for a buried treasure only in supposition, and it is a simple accident that with M. de Goncourt I should have for the most part to say No. With George Eliot, when she painted<sup>6</sup> that country with a far other intelligence, I always said Yes.

The most interesting part of Mr. Besant's lecture is unfortunately the briefest passage—his very cursory allusion to the "conscious moral purpose" of the novel. Here again it is not very clear whether he be recording a fact or laying down a principle; it is a great pity that in the latter case he should not have developed his idea. This branch of the subject is of immense importance, and Mr. Besant's few words point to considerations of the widest reach, not to be lightly disposed of. He will have treated the art of fiction but superficially who is not prepared to go every inch of the way that these considerations will carry him. It is for this reason that at the beginning of these remarks I was careful to notify the reader that my reflections on so large a theme have no pretension to be exhaustive. Like Mr. Besant, I have left the question of the morality of the novel till the last, and at the last I find I have used up my space. It is a question surrounded with difficulties, as witness the very first that meets us, in the form of a definite question, on the threshold. Vagueness, in such a discussion, is fatal, and what is the meaning of your morality and your conscious moral purpose? Will you not define your terms and explain how (a novel being a picture) a picture can be either moral or immoral? You wish to paint a moral picture or carve a moral statue: will you not tell us how you would set about it? We are discussing the Art of Fiction; questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution; questions of morality are quite another affair, and will you not let us see how it is that you find it so easy to mix them up? These things are so clear to Mr. Besant that he has deduced from them a law which he sees embodied in English fiction, and which is "a truly admirable thing and a great cause for congratulation." It is a great cause for congratulation indeed when such thorny problems become as smooth as silk. I may add that in so far as Mr. Besant perceives that in point of fact English fiction has addressed itself prepon-

6. Cf. *Silas Marner*.

derantly to these delicate questions he will appear to many people to have made a vain discovery. They will have been positively struck, on the contrary, with the moral timidity of the usual English novelist; with his (or with her) aversion to face the difficulties with which on every side the treatment of reality bristles. He is apt to be extremely shy (whereas the picture that Mr. Besant draws is a picture of boldness), and the sign of his work, for the most part, is a cautious silence on certain subjects. In the English novel (by which of course I mean the American as well), more than in any other, there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature. There is the great difference, in short, between what they talk of in conversation and what they talk of in print. The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field, and I should directly reverse Mr. Besant's remark and say not that the English novel has a purpose, but that it has a diffidence. To what degree a purpose in a work of art is a source of corruption I shall not attempt to inquire; the one that seems to me least dangerous is the purpose of making a perfect work. As for our novel, I may say lastly on this score that as we find it in England today it strikes me as addressed in a large degree to "young people," and that this in itself constitutes a presumption that it will be rather shy. There are certain things which it is generally agreed not to discuss, not even to mention, before young people. That is very well, but the absence of discussion is not a symptom of the moral passion. The purpose of the English novel—"a truly admirable thing, and a great cause for congratulation"—strikes me therefore as rather negative.

There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is, to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to me an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground: if the youthful aspirant take it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of "purpose." There are many other useful things that might be said to him, but I have come to the end of my article, and can only touch them as I pass. The critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whom I have already quoted, draws attention to the danger, in speaking of the art of fiction, of generalizing. The danger that he has in mind is rather, I imagine, that of particularizing, for there

are some comprehensive remarks which, in addition to those embodied in Mr. Besant's suggestive lecture, might without fear of misleading him be addressed to the ingenuous student. I should remind him first of the magnificence of the form that is open to him, which offers to sight so few restrictions and such innumerable opportunities. The other arts, in comparison, appear confined and hampered; the various conditions under which they are exercised are so rigid and definite. But the only condition that I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is, as I have already said, that it be sincere. This freedom is a splendid privilege, and the first lesson of the young novelist is to learn to be worthy of it. "Enjoy it as it deserves," I should say to him; "take possession of it, explore it to its utmost extent, publish it, rejoice in it. All life belongs to you, and do not listen either to those who would shut you up into corners of it and tell you that it is only here and there that art inhabits, or to those who would persuade you that this heavenly messenger wings her way outside of life altogether, breathing a superfine air, and turning away her head from the truth of things. There is no impression of life, no manner of seeing it and feeling it, to which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place; you have only to remember that talents so dissimilar as those of Alexandre Dumas and Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Gustave Flaubert have worked in this field with equal glory. Do not think too much about optimism and pessimism; try and catch the color of life itself. In France today we see a prodigious effort (that of Emile Zola,<sup>7</sup> to whose solid and serious work no explorer of the capacity of the novel can allude without respect), we see an extraordinary effort vitiated by a spirit of pessimism on a narrow basis. M. Zola is magnificent, but he strikes an English reader as ignorant; he has an air of working in the dark; if he had as much light as energy, his results would be of the highest value. As for the aberrations of a shallow optimism, the ground (of English fiction especially) is strewn with their brittle particles as with broken glass. If you must indulge in conclusions, let them have the taste of a wide knowledge. Remember that your first duty is to be as complete as possible—to make as perfect a work. Be generous and delicate and pursue the prize."

1884, 1888

7. Cf. James's study of Zola in *Notes on Novelists* (1914), pp. 26-64.

The Beast in the Jungle<sup>1</sup>

## I

What determined the speech that startled him in the course of their encounter scarcely matters, being probably but some words spoken by himself quite without intention—spoke as they lingered and slowly moved together after their renewal of acquaintance. He had been conveyed by friends an hour or two before to the house at which she was staying; the party of visitors at the other house, of whom he was one, and thanks to whom it was his theory, as always, that he was lost in the crowd, had been invited over to luncheon. There had been after luncheon much dispersal, all in the interest of the original motive, a view of Weatherend itself<sup>2</sup> and the fine things, intrinsic features, pictures, heirlooms, treasures of all the arts, that made the place almost famous; and the great rooms were so numerous that guests could wander at their will, hang back from the principal group and in cases where they took such matters with the last seriousness give themselves up to mysterious appreciations and measurements. There were

1. Among the selections in this volume, "The Beast in the Jungle" represents the vintage James, with the highest complexity of symbolism and, at the same time, the greatest clarity of motivation. He wrote the story in 1901, immediately after completing *The Ambassadors*—to James' mind his most finished product—and it would seem that this story owes much to that novel for its motivation. Like Strether in *The Ambassadors*, John Marcher spends his life in the shadow of the more vivid experiences of others. Both lives are tragic because the means of escape lie at hand, ready for the grasping. By comparison, the force of this story is heightened because Marcher's predicament is recognized by only one individual, May Bartram, and she alone could have saved him.

In his preface to the story published in the New York Edition of his collected works, James describes his "poor gentleman" as having "the conviction, lodged in his brain, part and parcel of his imagination from far back, that experience would be marked for him, and whether for good or for ill, by some rare distinction, some incalculable violence or unprecedented stroke. \* \* \* Therefore as each item of experience comes, with its possibilities, into view, he can but dismiss it under this sterilising habit of the failure to find it good enough and thence to appropriate it. \* \* \* He is afraid to recognise what he incidentally misses, since what his

high belief amounts to is not that he shall have felt and vibrated less than any one else, but that he shall have felt and vibrated more; which no acknowledgment of the minor loss must conflict with." This fear James symbolizes as the threatened leap of the beast.

So Marcher moves on through his detached life, the jungle of his own egoism and fear of experience. In "The Art of Fiction" James defines experience as being never limited and never complete—"it is an immense sensibility." His fatal lack in this capacity prevents Marcher from comprehending his long awaited "rare and strange" fate to be simply that nothing will ever happen to him, that he is to be a man without being human. The figurative beast strikes when Marcher discovers, too late, that the springs of life were in May Bartram's more acute and suffering sensibility.

The story was first published in a volume of stories, *The Better Sort* (1903), but the author placed it in a collection of his tales of the "quasi-supernatural" in the volume entitled *The Altar of the Dead* in the New York Edition (1907-1917).

2. As Leon Edel points out in his introduction to *Henry James Selected Fiction*, the author sets the tone early in the story by the uncomplicated symbolism of Weatherend's name, "suggesting temporal changes and the seasons," and the suggestive comparison in the names of May and Marcher.

persons to be observed, singly or in couples, bending toward objects in out-of-the-way corners with their hands on their knees and their heads nodding quite as with the emphasis of an excited sense of smell. When they were two they either mingled their sounds of ecstasy or melted into silences of even deeper import, so that there were aspects of the occasion that gave it for Marcher much the air of the "look round," previous to a sale highly advertised, that excites or quenches, as may be, the dream of acquisition. The dream of acquisition at Weatherend would have had to be wild indeed, and John Marcher found himself, among such suggestions, disconcerted almost equally by the presence of those who knew too much and by that of those who knew nothing. The great rooms caused so much poetry and history to press upon him that he needed some straying apart to feel in a proper relation with them, though this impulse was not, as happened, like the gloating of some of his companions, to be compared to the movements of a dog sniffing a cupboard. It had an issue promptly enough in a direction that was not to have been calculated.

It led, briefly, in the course of the October afternoon, to his closer meeting with May Bartram, whose face, a reminder, yet not quite a remembrance, as they sat much separated at a very long table, had begun merely by troubling him rather pleasantly. It affected him as the sequel of something of which he had lost the beginning. He knew it, and for the time quite welcomed it, as a continuation, but didn't know what it continued, which was an interest or an amusement the greater as he was also somehow aware—yet without a direct sign from her—that the young woman herself hadn't lost the thread. She hadn't lost it, but she wouldn't give it back to him, he saw, without some putting forth of his hand for it; and he not only saw that, but saw several things more, things odd enough in the light of the fact that at the moment some accident of grouping brought them face to face he was still merely fumbling with the idea that any contact between them in the past would have had no importance. If it had had no importance he scarcely knew why his actual impression of her should so seem to have so much; the answer to which, however, was that in such a life as they all appeared to be leading for the moment one could but take things as they came. He was satisfied, without in the least being able to say why, that this young lady might roughly have ranked in the house as a poor relation; satisfied also that she was not there on a brief visit, but was more or less a part of the establishment—almost a working, a remunerated part. Didn't she enjoy at periods a protection that she paid for by helping, among other services, to show the place and explain it, deal with the tiresome people, answer questions about the dates of the building, the

styles of the furniture, the authorship of the pictures, the favourite haunts of the ghost? It wasn't that she looked as if you could have given her shillings—it was impossible to look less so. Yet when she finally drifted toward him, distinctly handsome, though ever so much older—older than when he had seen her before—it might have been as an effect of her guessing that he had, within the couple of hours, devoted more imagination to her than to all the others put together, and had thereby penetrated to a kind of truth that the others were too stupid for. She was there on harder terms than any one; she was there as a consequence of things suffered, one way and another, in the interval of years; and she remembered him very much as she was remembered—only a good deal better.

By the time they at last thus came to speech they were alone in one of the rooms—remarkable for a fine portrait over the chimney-place—out of which their friends had passed, and the charm of it was that even before they had spoken they had practically arranged with each other to stay behind for talk. The charm, happily, was in other things too—partly in there being scarce a spot at Weatherend without something to stay behind for. It was in the way the autumn day looked into the high windows as it waned; the way the red light, breaking at the close from under a low sombre sky, reached out in a long shaft and played over old wainscots, old tapestry, old gold, old colour. It was most of all perhaps in the way she came to him as if, since she had been turned on to deal with the simpler sort, he might, should he choose to keep the whole thing down, just take her mild attention for a part of her general business. As soon as he heard her voice, however, the gap was filled up and the missing link supplied; the slight irony he divined in her attitude lost its advantage. He almost jumped at it to get there before her. "I met you years and years ago in Rome. I remember all about it." She confessed to disappointment—she had been so sure he didn't; and to prove how well he did he began to pour forth the particular recollections that popped up as he called for them. Her face and her voice, all at his service now, worked the miracle—the impression operating like the torch of a lamplighter who touches into flame, one by one, a long row of gas-jets. Marcher flattered himself the illumination was brilliant, yet he was really still more pleased on her showing him, with amusement, that in his haste to make everything right he had got most things rather wrong. It hadn't been at Rome—it had been at Naples; and it hadn't been eight years before—it had been more nearly ten. She hadn't been, either, with her uncle and aunt, but with her mother and her brother; in addition to which it was not with the Pemples *he* had been, but with the Boyers,

coming down in their company from Rome—a point on which she insisted, a little to his confusion, and as to which she had her evidence in hand. The Boyers she had known, but didn't know the Pembrles, though she had heard of them, and it was the people he was with who had made them acquainted. The incident of the thunderstorm that had raged round them with such violence as to drive them for refuge into an excavation—this incident had not occurred at the Palace of the Cæsars, but at Pompeii, on an occasion when they had been present there at an important find.

He accepted her amendments, he enjoyed her corrections, though the moral of them was, she pointed out, that he *really* didn't remember the least thing about her;<sup>3</sup> and he only felt it as a drawback that when all was made strictly historic there didn't appear much of anything left. They lingered together still, she neglecting her office—for from the moment he was so clever she had no proper right to him—and both neglecting the house, just waiting as to see if a memory or two more wouldn't again breathe on them. It hadn't taken them many minutes, after all, to put down on the table, like the cards of a pack, those that constituted their respective hands; only what came out was that the pack was unfortunately not perfect—that the past, invoked, invited, encouraged, could give them, naturally, no more than it had. It had made them anciently meet—her at twenty, him at twenty-five; but nothing was so strange, they seemed to say to each other, as that, while so occupied, it hadn't done a little more for them. They looked at each other as with the feeling of an occasion missed; the present would have been so much better if the other, in the far distance, in the foreign land, hadn't been so stupidly meagre. There weren't apparently, all counted, more than a dozen little old things that had succeeded in coming to pass between them; trivialities of youth, simplicities of freshness, stupidities of ignorance, small possible germs, but too deeply buried—too deeply (didn't it seem?) to sprout after so many years. Marcher could only feel he ought to have rendered her some service—saved her from a capsized boat in the Bay or at least recovered her dressing-bag, filched from her cab in the streets of Naples by a lazzarone with a stiletto. Or it would have been nice if he could have been taken with fever all alone at his hotel, and she could have come to look after him, to write to his people, to drive him out in convalescence. *Then* they would be in possession of the something or other that their actual show seemed to lack. It yet somehow presented itself, this show, as too good to be spoiled; so that they were reduced for a few minutes more to wondering a

3. A portent of their different degrees of awareness of life; the difference becomes more evident as their relationship grows.

little helplessly why—since they seemed to know a certain number of the same people—their reunion had been so long averted. They didn't use that name for it, but their delay from minute to minute to join the others was a kind of confession that they didn't quite want it to be a failure. Their attempted supposition of reasons for their not having met but showed how little they knew of each other. There came in fact a moment when Marcher felt a positive pang. It was vain to pretend she was an old friend, for all the communities were wanting, in spite of which it was as an old friend that he saw she would have suited him. He had new ones enough—was surrounded with them for instance on the stage of the other house; as a new one he probably wouldn't have so much as noticed her. He would have liked to invent something, get her to make-believe with him that some passage of a romantic or critical kind *had* originally occurred. He was really almost reaching out in imagination—as against time—for something that would do, and saying to himself that if it didn't come this sketch of a fresh start would show for quite awkwardly bungled. They would separate, and now for no second or no third chance. They would have tried and not succeeded. Then it was, just at the turn, as he afterwards made it out to himself, that, everything else failing, she herself decided to take up the case and, as it were, save the situation. He felt as soon as she spoke that she had been consciously keeping back what she said and hoping to get on without it; a scruple in her that immensely touched him when, by the end of three or four minutes more, he was able to measure it. What she brought out, at any rate, quite cleared the air and supplied the link—the link it was so odd he should frivolously have managed to lose.

"You know you told me something I've never forgotten and that again and again has made me think of you since; it was that tremendously hot day when we went to Sorrento, across the bay, for the breeze. What I allude to was what you said to me, on the way back, as we sat under the awning of the boat enjoying the cool. Have you forgotten?"

He had forgotten and was even more surprised than ashamed. But the great thing was that he saw in this no vulgar reminder of any "sweet" speech. The vanity of women had long memories, but she was making no claim on him of a compliment or a mistake. With another woman, a totally different one, he might have feared the recall possibly even of some imbecile "offer." So, in having to say that he had indeed forgotten, he was conscious rather of a loss than of a gain; he already saw an interest in the matter of her mention. "I try to think—but I give it up. Yet I remember the Sorrento day."



"I'm not very sure you do," May Bartram after a moment said; "and I'm not very sure I ought to want you to. It's dreadful to bring a person back at any time to what he was ten years before. If you've lived away from it," she smiled, "so much the better."

"Ah if you haven't why should I?" he asked.

"Lived away, you mean, from what I myself was?"

"From what I was. I was of course an ass," Marcher went on; "but I would rather know from you just the sort of ass I was than—from the moment you have something in your mind—not know anything."

Still, however, she hesitated. "But if you've completely ceased to be that sort—?"

"Why I can then all the more bear to know. Besides, perhaps I haven't."

"Perhaps. Yet if you haven't," she added, "I should suppose you'd remember. Not indeed that I in the least connect with my impression the invidious name you use. If I had only thought you foolish," she explained, "the thing I speak of wouldn't so have remained with me. It was about yourself." She waited as if it might come to him; but as, only meeting her eyes in wonder, he gave no sign, she burnt her ships. "Has it ever happened?"

Then it was that, while he continued to stare, a light broke for him and the blood slowly came to his face, which began to burn with recognition. "Do you mean I told you—?" But he faltered, lest what came to him shouldn't be right, lest he should only give himself away.

"It was something about yourself that it was natural one shouldn't forget—that is if one remembered you at all. That's why I ask you," she smiled, "if the thing you then spoke of has ever come to pass?"

Oh then he saw, but he was lost in wonder and found himself embarrassed. This, he also saw, made her sorry for him, as if her allusion had been a mistake. It took him but a moment, however, to feel it hadn't been, much as it had been a surprise. After the first little shock of it her knowledge on the contrary began, even if rather strangely, to taste sweet to him. She was the only other person in the world then who would have it, and she had had it all these years, while the fact of his having so breathed his secret had unaccountably faded from him. No wonder they couldn't have met as if nothing had happened. "I judge," he finally said, "that I know what you mean. Only I had strangely enough lost any sense of having taken you so far into my confidence."

"Is it because you've taken so many others as well?"

"I've taken nobody. Not a creature since then."

"So that I'm the only person who knows?"

"The only person in the world."

"Well," she quickly replied, "I myself have never spoken. I've never, never repeated of you what you told me." She looked at him so that he perfectly believed her. Their eyes met over it in such a way that he was without a doubt. "And I never will."

She spoke with an earnestness that, as if almost excessive, put him at ease about her possible derision. Somehow the whole question was a new luxury to him—that is from the moment she was in possession. If she didn't take the sarcastic view she clearly took the sympathetic, and that was what he had had, in all the long time, from no one whomsoever. What he felt was that he couldn't at present have begun to tell her, and yet could profit perhaps exquisitely by the accident of having done so of old. "Please don't then. We're just right as it is."

"Oh I am," she laughed, "if you are!" To which she added: "Then you do still feel in the same way?"

It was impossible he shouldn't take to himself that she was really interested, though it all kept coming as perfect surprise. He had thought of himself so long as abominably alone, and lo he wasn't alone a bit. He hadn't been, it appeared, for an hour—since those moments on the Sorrento boat. It was *she* who had been, he seemed to see as he looked at her—she who had been made so by the graceless fact of his lapse of fidelity. To tell her what he had told her—what had it been but to ask something of her? something that she had given, in her charity, without his having, by a remembrance, by a return of the spirit, failing another encounter, so much as thanked her. What he had asked of her had been simply at first not to laugh at him. She had beautifully not done so for ten years, and she was not doing so now. So he had endless gratitude to make up. Only for that he must see just how he had figured to her. "What, exactly, was the account I gave—?"

"Of the way you did feel? Well, it was very simple. You said you had had from your earliest time, as the deepest thing within you, the sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to you, that you had in your bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps overwhelm you."

"Do you call that very simple?" John Marcher asked.

She thought a moment. "It was perhaps because I seemed, as you spoke, to understand it."

"You do understand it?" he eagerly asked.

Again she kept her kind eyes on him. "You still have the belief?"

"Oh!" he exclaimed helplessly. There was too much to say.

"Whatever it's to be," she clearly made out, "it hasn't yet come."

He shook his head in complete surrender now. "It hasn't yet come. Only, you know, it isn't anything I'm to *do*, to achieve in the world, to be distinguished or admired for. I'm not such an ass as *that*. It would be much better, no doubt, if I were."

"It's to be something you're merely to suffer?"

"Well, say to wait for—to have to meet, to face, to see suddenly break out in my life; possibly destroying all further consciousness, possibly annihilating me; possibly, on the other hand, only altering everything, striking at the root of all my world and leaving me to the consequences, however they shape themselves."

She took this in, but the light in her eyes continued for him not to be that of mockery. "Isn't what you describe perhaps but the expectation—or at any rate the sense of danger, familiar to so many people—of falling in love?"

John Marcher wondered. "Did you ask me that before?"

"No—I wasn't so free-and-easy then. But it's what strikes me now."

"Of course," he said after a moment, "it strikes you. Of course it strikes *me*. Of course what's in store for me may be no more than that. The only thing is," he went on, "that I think if it had been that I should by this time know."

"Do you mean because you've *been* in love?" And then as he but looked at her in silence: "You've been in love, and it hasn't meant such a cataclysm, hasn't proved the great affair?"

"Here I am, you see. It hasn't been overwhelming."

"Then it hasn't been love," said May Bartram.<sup>4</sup>

"Well, I at least thought it was. I took it for that—I've taken it till now. It was agreeable, it was delightful, it was miserable," he explained. "But it wasn't strange. It wasn't what *my* affair's to be."

"You want something all to yourself—something that nobody else knows or *has* known?"

"It isn't a question of what I 'want'—God knows I don't want anything. It's only a question of the apprehension that haunts me—that I live with day by day."

He said this so lucidly and consistently that he could see it further impose itself. If she hadn't been interested before she'd have been interested now. "Is it a sense of coming violence?"

Evidently now too again he liked to talk of it. "I don't think of it as—when it does come—necessarily violent. I only think of it as natural and as of course above all unmistakeable. I think of

4. May's comment, relating both to Marcher's experiences in general and to his failure in participation, even in

love, lights up the entire situation but leaves Marcher in the shadow.

it simply as *the* thing. *The* thing will of itself appear natural."

"Then how will it appear strange?"

Marcher bethought himself. "It won't—to *me*."

"To whom then?"

"Well," he replied, smiling at last, "say to you."

"Oh then I'm to be present?"

"Why you *are* present—since you know."

"I see." She turned it over. "But I mean at the catastrophe."

At this, for a minute, their lightness gave way to their gravity; it was as if the long look they exchanged held them together. "It will only depend on yourself—if you'll watch with me."

"Are you afraid?" she asked.

"Don't leave me *now*," he went on.

"Are you afraid?" she repeated.

"Do you think me simply out of my mind?" he pursued instead of answering. "Do I merely strike you as a harmless lunatic?"

"No," said May Bartram. "I understand you. I believe you."

"You mean you feel how my obsession—poor old thing!—may correspond to some possible reality?"

"To some possible reality."

"Then you *will* watch with me?"

She hesitated, then for the third time put her question. "Are you afraid?"

"Did I tell you I was—at Naples?"

"No, you said nothing about it."

"Then I don't know. And I should *like* to know," said John Marcher. "You'll tell me yourself whether you think so. If you'll watch with me you'll see."

"Very good then." They had been moving by this time across the room, and at the door, before passing out, they paused as for the full wind-up of their understanding. "I'll watch with you," said May Bartram.

## II

The fact that she "knew"—knew and yet neither chaffed him nor betrayed him—had in a short time begun to constitute between them a goodly bond, which became more marked when, within the year that followed their afternoon at Weatherend, the opportunities for meeting multiplied. The event that thus promoted these occasions was the death of the ancient lady her great-aunt, under whose wing, since losing her mother, she had to such an extent found shelter, and who, though but the widowed mother of the new successor to the property, had succeeded—thanks to a high tone and a high temper—in not forfeiting the supreme position at the great house. The deposition of this personage arrived but with her death, which, followed by many changes, made in

particular a difference for the young woman in whom Marcher's expert attention had recognised from the first a dependent with a pride that might ache though it didn't bristle. Nothing for a long time had made him easier than the thought that the aching must have been much soothed by Miss Bartram's now finding herself able to set up a small home in London. She had acquired property, to an amount that made that luxury just possible, under her aunt's extremely complicated will, and when the whole matter began to be straightened out, which indeed took time, she let him know that the happy issue was at last in view.<sup>5</sup> He had seen her again before that day, both because she had more than once accompanied the ancient lady to town and because he had paid another visit to the friends who so conveniently made of Weatherend one of the charms of their own hospitality. These friends had taken him back there; he had achieved there again with Miss Bartram some quiet detachment; and he had in London succeeded in persuading her to more than one brief absence from her aunt. They went together, on these latter occasions, to the National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum, where, among vivid reminders, they talked of Italy at large—not now attempting to recover, as at first, the taste of their youth and their ignorance. That recovery, the first day at Weatherend, had served its purpose well, had given them quite enough; so that they were, to Marcher's sense, no longer hovering about the headwaters of their stream, but had felt their boat pushed sharply off and down the current.

They were literally afloat together; for our gentleman this was marked, quite as marked as that the fortunate cause of it was just the buried treasure of her knowledge. He had with his own hands dug up this little hoard, brought to light—that is to within reach of the dim day constituted by their discretions and privacies—the object of value the hiding-place of which he had, after putting it into the ground himself, so strangely, so long forgotten. The rare luck of his having again just stumbled on the spot made him indifferent to any other question; he would doubtless have devoted more time to the odd accident of his lapse of memory if he hadn't been moved to devote so much to the sweetness, the comfort, as he felt, for the future, that this accident itself had helped to keep fresh. It had never entered into his plan that any one should “know,” and mainly for the reason that it wasn't in him to tell any one. That would have been impossible, for nothing but the amusement of a cold world would have waited on it. Since, however, a mysterious fate had opened his mouth betimes, in spite of him, he would count that a compensation and profit by it to the

5. James' persistent preference for the financial independence of his characters did not result from any contempt of an

earned salary, but from his wish to have characters “free” for the interplay of situation and response.

utmost. That the right person *should* know tempered the asperity of his secret more even than his shyness had permitted him to imagine; and May Bartram was clearly right, because—well, because there she was. Her knowledge simply settled it; he would have been sure enough by this time had she been wrong. There was that in his situation, no doubt, that disposed him too much to see her as a mere confidant, taking all her light for him from the fact—the fact only—of her interest in his predicament; from her mercy, sympathy, seriousness, her consent not to regard him as the funniest of the funny. Aware, in fine, that her price for him was just in her giving him this constant sense of his being admirably spared, he was careful to remember that she had also a life of her own, with things that might happen to *her*, things that in friendship one should likewise take account of. Something fairly remarkable came to pass with him, for that matter, in this connexion—something represented by a certain passage of his consciousness, in the suddenest way, from one extreme to the other.

He had thought himself, so long as nobody knew, the most disinterested person in the world, carrying his concentrated burden, his perpetual suspense, ever so quietly, holding his tongue about it, giving others no glimpse of it nor of its effect upon his life, asking of them no allowance and only making on his side all those that were asked. He hadn't disturbed people with the quceriness of their having to know a haunted man, though he had had moments of rather special temptation on hearing them say they were forsooth "unsettled." If they were as unsettled as he was—he who had never been settled for an hour in his life—they would know what it meant. Yet it wasn't, all the same, for him to make them, and he listened to them civilly enough. This was why he had such good—though possibly such rather colourless—manners; this was why, above all, he could regard himself, in a greedy world, as decently—as in fact perhaps even a little sublimely—unselfish. Our point is accordingly that he valued this character quite sufficiently to measure his present danger of letting it lapse, against which he promised himself to be much on his guard. He was quite ready, none the less, to be selfish just a little, since surely no more charming occasion for it had come to him. "Just a little," in a word, was just as much as Miss Bartram, taking one day with another, would let him. He never would be in the least coercive, and would keep well before him the lines on which consideration for her—the very highest—ought to proceed. He would thoroughly establish the heads under which her affairs, her requirements, her peculiarities—he went so far as to give them the latitude of that name—would come into their intercourse. All this naturally was a sign of how much he took the intercourse itself for granted. There

was nothing more to be done about *that*. It simply existed; had sprung into being with her first penetrating question to him in the autumn light there at Weatherend. The real form it should have taken on the basis that stood out large was the form of their marrying. But the devil in this was that the very basis itself put marrying out of the question. His conviction, his apprehension, his obsession, in short, wasn't a privilege he could invite a woman to share; and that consequence of it was precisely what was the matter with him. Something or other lay in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years, like a crouching beast in the jungle. It signified little whether the crouching beast were destined to slay him or to be slain. The definite point was the inevitable spring of the creature; and the definite lesson from that was that a man of feeling didn't cause himself to be accompanied by a lady on a tiger-hunt. Such was the image under which he had ended by figuring his life.

They had at first, none the less, in the scattered hours spent together, made no allusion to that view of it; which was a sign he was handsomely alert to give that he didn't expect, that he in fact didn't care, always to be talking about it. Such a feature in one's outlook was really like a hump on one's back. The difference it made every minute of the day existed quite independently of discussion. One discussed of course *like* a hunchback, for there was always, if nothing else, the hunchback face. That remained, and she was watching him; but people watched best, as a general thing, in silence, so that such would be predominantly the manner of their vigil. Yet he didn't want, at the same time, to be tense and solemn; tense and solemn was what he imagined he too much showed for with other people. The thing to be, with the one person who knew, was easy and natural—to make the reference rather than be seeming to avoid it, to avoid it rather than be seeming to make it, and to keep it, in any case, familiar, facetious even, rather than pedantic and portentous. Some such consideration as the latter was doubtless in his mind for instance when he wrote pleasantly to Miss Bartram that perhaps the great thing he had so long felt as in the lap of the gods was no more than this circumstance, which touched him so nearly, of her acquiring a house in London. It was the first allusion they had yet again made, needing any other hitherto so little; but when she replied, after having given him the news, that she was by no means satisfied with such a trifle as the climax to so special a suspense, she almost set him wondering if she hadn't even a larger conception of singularity for him than he had for himself. He was at all events destined to become aware little by little, as time went by, that she was all the while looking at his life, judging it, measuring it, in the light of the thing she

knew, which grew to be at last, with the consecration of the years, never mentioned between them save as "the real truth" about him. That had always been his own form of reference to it, but she adopted the form so quietly that, looking back at the end of a period, he knew there was no moment at which it was traceable that she had, as he might say, got inside his idea, or exchanged the attitude of beautifully indulging for that of still more beautifully believing him.

It was always open to him to accuse her of seeing him but as the most harmless of maniacs, and this, in the long run—since it covered so much ground—was his easiest description of their friendship. He had a screw loose for her, but she liked him in spite of it and was practically, against the rest of the world, his kind wise keeper, unremunerated but fairly amused and, in the absence of other near ties, not disreputably occupied. The rest of the world of course thought him queer, but she, she only, knew how, and above all why, queer; which was precisely what enabled her to dispose the concealing veil in the right folds. She took his gaiety from him—since it had to pass with them for gaiety—as she took everything else; but she certainly so far justified by her unerring touch his finer sense of the degree to which he had ended by convincing her. *She* at least never spoke of the secret of his life except as "the real truth about you," and she had in fact a wonderful way of making it seem, as such, the secret of her own life too. That was in fine how he so constantly felt her as allowing for him; he couldn't on the whole call it anything else. He allowed for himself, but she, exactly, allowed still more; partly because, better placed for a sight of the matter, she traced his unhappy perversion through reaches of its course into which he could scarce follow it. He knew how he felt, but, besides knowing that, she knew how he *looked* as well; he knew each of the things of importance he was insidiously kept from doing, but she could add up the amount they made, understand how much, with a lighter weight on his spirit, he might have done, and thereby establish how, clever as he was, he fell short. Above all she was in the secret of the difference between the forms he went through—those of his little office under Government, those of caring for his modest patrimony, for his library, for his garden in the country, for the people in London whose invitations he accepted and repaid—and the detachment that reigned beneath them and that made of all behaviour, all that could in the least be called behaviour, a long act of dissimulation. What it had come to was that he wore a mask painted with the social simper, out of the eye-holes of which there looked eyes of an expression not in the least matching the other features. This the stupid world, even after years, had never more



than half-discovered. It was only May Bartram who had, and she achieved, by an art indescribable, the feat of at once—or perhaps it was only alternately—meeting the eyes from in front and mingling her own vision, as from over his shoulder, with their peep through the apertures.

So while they grew older together she did watch with him, and so she let this association give shape and colour to her own existence. Beneath *her* forms as well detachment had learned to sit, and behaviour had become for her, in the social sense, a false account of herself. There was but one account of her that would have been true all the while and that she could give straight to nobody, least of all to John Marcher. Her whole attitude was a virtual statement, but the perception of that only seemed called to take its place for him as one of the many things necessarily crowded out of his consciousness. If she had moreover, like himself, to make sacrifices to their real truth, it was to be granted that her compensation might have affected her as more prompt and more natural. They had long periods, in this London time, during which, when they were together, a stranger might have listened to them without in the least pricking up his ears; on the other hand the real truth was equally liable at any moment to rise to the surface, and the auditor would then have wondered indeed what they were talking about. They had from an early hour made up their mind that society was, luckily, unintelligent, and the margin allowed them by this had fairly become one of their commonplaces. Yet there were still moments when the situation turned almost fresh—usually under the effect of some expression drawn from herself. Her expressions doubtless repeated themselves, but her intervals were generous. "What saves us, you know, is that we answer so completely to so usual an appearance: that of the man and woman whose friendship has become such a daily habit—or almost—as to be at last indispensable." That for instance was a remark she had frequently enough had occasion to make, though she had given it at different times different developments. What we are especially concerned with is the turn it happened to take from her one afternoon when he had come to see her in honour of her birthday. This anniversary had fallen on a Sunday, at a season of thick fog and general outward gloom; but he had brought her his customary offering, having known her now long enough to have established a hundred small traditions. It was one of his proofs to himself, the present he made her on her birthday, that he hadn't sunk into real selfishness.<sup>6</sup> It was mostly nothing more than a small trinket, but it was always fine of its kind, and he was

6. James makes use of smaller incidents to reveal Marcher's gift for deluding

himself, on which the principal issue of the story depends.

regularly careful to pay for it more than he thought he could afford. "Our habit saves you at least, don't you see? because it makes you, after all, for the vulgar, indistinguishable from other men. What's the most inveterate mark of men in general? Why the capacity to spend endless time with dull women—to spend it I won't say without being bored, but without minding that they are, without being driven off at a tangent by it; which comes to the same thing. I'm your dull woman, a part of the daily bread for which you pray at church. That covers your tracks more than anything."

"And what covers yours?" asked Marcher, whom his dull woman could most to this extent amuse. "I see of course what you mean by your saving me, in this way and that, so far as other people are concerned—I've seen it all along. Only what is it that saves you? I often think, you know, of that."

She looked as if she sometimes thought of that too, but rather in a different way. "Where other people, you mean, are concerned?"

"Well, you're really so in with me, you know—as a sort of result of my being so in with yourself. I mean of my having such an immense regard for you, being so tremendously mindful of all you've done for me. I sometimes ask myself if it's quite fair. Fair I mean to have so involved and—since one may say it—interested you. I almost feel as if you hadn't really had time to do anything else."

"Anything else but be interested?" she asked. "Ah what else does one ever want to be? If I've been 'watching' with you, as we long ago agreed I was to do, watching's always in itself an absorption."

"Oh certainly," John Marcher said, "if you hadn't had your curiosity—! Only doesn't it sometimes come to you as time goes on that your curiosity isn't being particularly repaid?"

May Bartram had a pause. "Do you ask that, by any chance, because you feel at all that yours isn't? I mean because you have to wait so long."

Oh he understood what she meant! "For the thing to happen that never does happen? For the beast to jump out? No, I'm just where I was about it. It isn't a matter as to which I can *choose*, I can decide for a change. It isn't one as to which there *can* be a change. It's in the lap of the gods. One's in the hands of one's law—there one is. As to the form the law will take, the way it will operate, that's its own affair."

"Yes," Miss Bartram replied; "of course one's fate's coming, of course it *has* come in its own form and its own way, all the while. Only, you know, the form and the way in your case were to have been—well, something so exceptional and, as one may say, so particularly *your* own."

Something in this made him look at her with suspicion. "You

say 'were to *have* been,' as if in your heart you had begun to doubt."

"Oh!" she vaguely protested.

"As if you believe," he went on, "that nothing will now take place."

She shook her head slowly but rather inscrutably. "You're far from my thought."

He continued to look at her. "What then is the matter with you?"

"Well," she said after another wait, "the matter with me is simply that I'm more sure than ever my curiosity, as you call it, will be but too well repaid."

They were frankly grave now; he had got up from his seat, had turned once more about the little drawing-room to which, year after year, he brought his inevitable topic; in which he had, as he might have said, tasted their intimate community with every sauce, where every object was as familiar to him as the things of his own house and the very carpets were worn with his fitful walk very much as the desks in old counting-houses are worn by the elbows of generations of clerks. The generations of his nervous moods had been at work there, and the place was the written history of his whole middle life. Under the impression of what his friend had just said he knew himself, for some reason, more aware of these things; which made him, after a moment, stop again before her. "Is it possibly that you've grown afraid?"

"Afraid?" He thought, as she repeated the word, that his question had made her, a little, change colour; so that, lest he should have touched on a truth, he explained very kindly: "You remember that that was what you asked *me* long ago—that first day at Weatherend."

"Oh yes, and you told me you didn't know—that I was to see for myself. We've said little about it since, even in so long a time."

"Precisely," Marcher interposed—"quite as if it were too delicate a matter for us to make free with. Quite as if we might find, on pressure, that I *am* afraid. For then," he said, "we shouldn't, should we? quite know what to do."

She had for the time no answer to this question. "There have been days when I thought you were. Only, of course," she added, "there have been days when we have thought almost anything."

"Everything. Oh!" Marcher softly groaned as with a gasp, half-spent, at the face, more uncovered just then than it had been for a long while, of the imagination always with them. It had always had its incalculable moments of glaring out, quite as with the very eyes of the very Beast, and, used as he was to them, they could still draw from him the tribute of a sigh that rose from the depths of his being. All they had thought, first and last, rolled over

him; the past seemed to have been reduced to mere barren speculation. This in fact was what the place had just struck him as so full of—the simplification of everything but the state of suspense. That remained only by seeming to hang in the void surrounding it. Even his original fear, if fear it had been, had lost itself in the desert. "I judge, however," he continued, "that you see I'm not afraid now."

"What I see, as I make it out, is that you've achieved something almost unprecedented in the way of getting used to danger. Living with it so long and so closely you've lost your sense of it; you know it's there, but you're indifferent, and you cease even, as of old, to have to whistle in the dark. Considering what the danger is," May Bartram wound up, "I'm bound to say I don't think your attitude could well be surpassed."

John Marcher faintly smiled. "It's heroic?"

"Certainly—call it that."

It was what he would have liked indeed to call it. "*I am* then a man of courage?"

"That's what you were to show me."

He still, however, wondered. "But doesn't the man of courage know what he's afraid of—or *not* afraid of? I don't know *that*, you see. I don't focus it. I can't name it. I only know I'm exposed."

"Yes, but exposed—how shall I say?—so directly. So intimately. That's surely enough."

"Enough to make you feel then—as what we may call the end and the upshot of our watch—that I'm not afraid?"

"You're not afraid. But it isn't," she said, "the end of our watch. That is it isn't the end of yours. You've everything still to see."

"Then why haven't you?" he asked. He had had, all along, today, the sense of her keeping something back, and he still had it. As this was his first impression of that it quite made a date. The case was the more marked as she didn't at first answer; which in turn made him go on. "You know something I don't." Then his voice, for that of a man of courage trembled a little. "You know what's to happen." Her silence, with the face she showed, was almost a confession—it made him sure. "You know, and you're afraid to tell me. It's so bad that you're afraid I'll find out."

All this might be true, for she did look as if, unexpectedly to her, he had crossed some mystic line that she had secretly drawn round her. Yet she might, after all, not have worried; and the real climax was that he himself, at all events, needn't. "You'll never find out."<sup>7</sup>

7. From this point, their relationship undergoes a subtle change. Marcher is aware that May knows the root of his predicament, while she, by her admis-

sion of this knowledge, may assume in his eyes a superiority incompatible with his thinking of their marriage.

III

It was all to have made, none the less, as I have said, a date; which came out in the fact that again and again, even after long intervals, other things that passed between them wore in relation to this hour but the character of recalls and results. Its immediate effect had been indeed rather to lighten insistence—almost to provoke a reaction; as if their topic had dropped by its own weight and as if moreover, for that matter, Marcher had been visited by one of his occasional warnings against egotism. He had kept up, he felt, and very decently on the whole, his consciousness of the importance of not being selfish, and it was true that he had never sinned in that direction without promptly enough trying to press the scales the other way. He often repaired his fault, the season permitting, by inviting his friend to accompany him to the opera; and it not infrequently thus happened that, to show he didn't wish her to have but one sort of food for her mind, he was the cause of her appearing there with him a dozen nights in the month. It even happened that, seeing her home at such times, he occasionally went in with her to finish, as he called it, the evening, and, the better to make his point, sat down to the frugal but always careful little supper that awaited his pleasure. His point was made, he thought, by his not eternally insisting with her on himself; made for instance, at such hours, when it befell that, her piano at hand and each of them familiar with it, they went over passages of the opera together. It chanced to be on one of these occasions, however, that he reminded her of her not having answered a certain question he had put to her during the talk that had taken place between them on her last birthday. "What is it that saves you?"—saved her, he meant, from that appearance of variation from the usual human type. If he had practically escaped remark, as she pretended, by doing, in the most important particular, what most men do—find the answer to life in patching up an alliance of a sort with a woman no better than himself—how had she escaped it, and how could the alliance, such as it was, since they must suppose it had been more or less noticed, have failed to make her rather positively talked about?

"I never said," May Bartram replied, "that it hadn't made me a good deal talked about."

"Ah well then you're not 'saved.'"

"It hasn't been a question for me. If you've had your woman I've had," she said, "my man."

"And you mean that makes you all right?"

Oh it was always as if there were so much to say! "I don't know why it shouldn't make me—humanly, which is what we're speaking of—as right as it makes you."

"I see," Marcher returned. "'Humanly,' no doubt, as showing that you're living for something. Not, that is, just for me and my secret."

May Bartram smiled. "I don't pretend it exactly shows that I'm not living for you. It's my intimacy with you that's in question."

He laughed as he saw what she meant. "Yes, but since, as you say, I'm only, so far as people make out, ordinary, you're—aren't you?—no more than ordinary either. You help me to pass for a man like another. So if I *am*, as I understand you, you're not compromised. Is that it?"

She had another of her waits, but she spoke clearly enough. "That's it. It's all that concerns me—to help you to pass for a man like another."

He was careful to acknowledge the remark handsomely. "How kind, how beautiful, you are to me! How shall I ever repay you?"

She had her last grave pause, as if there might be a choice of ways. But she chose. "By going on as you are."

It was into this going on as he was that they relapsed, and really for so long a time that the day inevitably came for a further sounding of their depths. These depths, constantly bridged over by a structure firm enough in spite of its lightness and of its occasional oscillation in the somewhat vertiginous air, invited on occasion, in the interest of their nerves, a dropping of the plummet and a measurement of the abyss. A difference had been made moreover, once for all, by the fact that she had all the while not appeared to feel the need of rebutting his charge of an idea within her that she didn't dare to express—a charge uttered just before one of the fullest of their later discussions ended. It had come up for him then that she "knew" something and that what she knew was bad—too bad to tell him. When he had spoken of it as visibly so bad that she was afraid he might find it out, her reply had left the matter too equivocal to be let alone and yet, for Marcher's special sensibility, almost too formidable again to touch. He circled about it at a distance that alternately narrowed and widened and that still wasn't much affected by the consciousness in him that there was nothing she could "know," after all, any better than he did. She had no source of knowledge he hadn't equally—except of course that she might have finer nerves. That was what women had where they were interested; they made out things, where people were concerned, that the people often couldn't have made out for themselves. Their nerves, their sensibility, their imagination, were conductors and revealers, and the beauty of May Bartram was in particular that she had given herself so to his case. He felt in these days what, oddly enough, he had never felt before,

the growth of a dread of losing her by some catastrophe—some catastrophe that yet wouldn't at all be *the* catastrophe: partly because she had almost of a sudden begun to strike him as more useful to him than ever yet, and partly by reason of an appearance of uncertainty in her health, coincident and equally new. It was characteristic of the inner detachment he had hitherto so successfully cultivated and to which our whole account of him is a reference, it was characteristic that his complications, such as they were, had never yet seemed so as at this crisis to thicken about him, even to the point of making him ask himself if he were, by any chance, of a truth, within sight or sound, within touch or reach, within the immediate jurisdiction, of the thing that waited.

When the day came, as come it had to, that his friend confessed to him her fear of a deep disorder in her blood, he felt somehow the shadow of a change and the chill of a shock. He immediately began to imagine aggravations and disasters, and above all to think of her peril as the direct menace for himself of personal privation. This indeed gave him one of those partial recoveries of equanimity that were agreeable to him—it showed him that what was still first in his mind was the loss she herself might suffer. "What if she should have to die before knowing, before seeing—?" It would have been brutal, in the early stages of her trouble, to put that question to her; but it had immediately sounded for him to his own concern, and the possibility was what most made him sorry for her. If she did "know," moreover, in the sense of her having had some—what should he think?—mystical irresistible light, this would make the matter not better, but worse, inasmuch as her original adoption of his own curiosity had quite become the basis of her life. She had been living to see what would *be* to be seen, and it would quite lacerate her to have to give up before the accomplishment of the vision. These reflexions, as I say, quickened his generosity; yet, make them as he might, he saw himself, with the lapse of the period, more and more disconcerted. It lapsed for him with a strange steady sweep, and the oddest oddity was that it gave him, independently of the threat of much inconvenience, almost the only positive surprise his career, if career it could be called, had yet offered him. She kept the house as she had never done; he had to go to her to see her—she could meet him nowhere now, though there was scarce a corner of their loved old London in which she hadn't in the past, at one time or another, done so; and he found her always seated by her fire in the deep old-fashioned chair she was less and less able to leave. He had been struck one day, after an absence exceeding his usual measure, with her suddenly looking much older to him than he had ever thought of her being; then he recognised that the suddenness was all on his side—he had

just simply and suddenly noticed. She looked older because inevitably, after so many years, she *was* old, or almost; which was of course true in still greater measure of her companion. If she was old, or almost, John Marcher assuredly was, and yet it was her showing of the lesson, not his own, that brought the truth home to him.<sup>8</sup> His surprises began here; when once they had begun they multiplied; they came rather with a rush: it was as if, in the oddest way in the world, they had all been kept back, sown in a thick cluster, for the late afternoon of life, the time at which for people in general the unexpected has died out.

One of them was that he should have caught himself—for he *had* so done—*really* wondering if the great accident would take form now as nothing more than his being condemned to see this charming woman, this admirable friend, pass away from him. He had never so unreservedly qualified her as while confronted in thought with such a possibility; in spite of which there was small doubt for him that as an answer to his long riddle the mere effacement of even so fine a feature of his situation would be an abject anti-climax. It would represent, as connected with his past attitude, a drop of dignity under the shadow of which his existence could only become the most grotesque of failures. He had been far from holding it a failure—long as he had waited for the appearance that was to make it a success. He had waited for quite another thing, not for such a thing as that. The breath of his good faith came short, however, as he recognised how long he had waited, or how long at least his companion had. That she, at all events, might be recorded as having waited in vain—this affected him sharply, and all the more because of his at first having done little more than amuse himself with the idea. It grew more grave as the gravity of her condition grew, and the state of mind it produced in him, which he himself ended by watching as if it had been some definite disfigurement of his outer person, may pass for another of his surprises. This conjoined itself still with another, the really stupefying consciousness of a question that he would have allowed to shape itself had he dared. What did everything mean—what, that is, did *she* mean, she and her vain waiting and her probable death and the soundless admonition of it all—unless that, at this time of day, it was simply, it was overwhelmingly too late? He had never at any stage of his queer consciousness admitted the whisper of such a correction; he had never till within these last few months been so false to his conviction as not to hold that what was to come to him had time, whether *he* struck himself as having it or not. That at

8. Marcher's sudden recognition of May's aging, in connection with her obviously serious illness, shatters his unawareness of his own age. The shock

induces the notion that his encounter with destiny is to be, not spectacular, but too late.



last, at last, he certainly hadn't it, to speak of, or had it but in the scantiest measure—such, soon enough, as things went with him, became the inference with which his old obsession had to reckon: and this it was not helped to do by the more and more confirmed appearance that the great vagueness casting the long shadow in which he had lived had, to attest itself, almost no margin left. Since it was in Time that he was to have met his fate, so it was in Time that his fate was to have acted; and as he waked up to the sense of no longer being young, which was exactly the sense of being stale, just as that, in turn, was the sense of being weak, he waked up to another matter beside. It all hung together; they were subject, he and the great vagueness, to an equal and indivisible law. When the possibilities themselves had accordingly turned stale, when the secret of the gods had grown faint, had perhaps even quite evaporated, that, and that only, was failure. It wouldn't have been failure to be bankrupt, dishonoured, pilloried, hanged; it was failure not to be anything.<sup>9</sup> And so, in the dark valley into which his path had taken its unlooked-for twist, he wondered not a little as he groped. He didn't care what awful crash might overtake him, with what ignominy or what monstrosity he might yet be associated—since he wasn't after all too utterly old to suffer—if it would only be decently proportionate to the posture he had kept, all his life, in the threatened presence of it. He had but one desire left—that he shouldn't have been “sold.”

#### IV

Then it was that, one afternoon, while the spring of the year was young and new she met all in her own way his frankest betrayal of these alarms. He had gone in late to see her, but evening hadn't settled and she was presented to him in that long fresh light of waning April days which affects us often with a sadness sharper than the greyest hours of autumn. The week had been warm, the spring was supposed to have begun early, and May Bartram sat, for the first time in the year, without a fire; a fact that, to Marcher's sense, gave the scene of which she formed part a smooth and ultimate look, an air of knowing, in its immaculate order and cold meaningless cheer, that it would never see a fire again. Her own aspect—he could scarce have said why—intensified this note. Almost as white as wax, with the marks and signs in her face as numerous and as fine as if they had been etched by a needle, with soft white draperies relieved by a faded green scarf on the delicate tone of which the years had further refined, she was the picture of a serene and exquisite but impenetrable sphinx, whose head, or indeed all

9. By his own failure to give love, and his consequent incapacity to receive it, Marcher invites the first stirring of the

beast. The lair is time itself, a jungle to Marcher because he has wastefully stumbled through it.

whose person, might have been powdered with silver. She was a sphinx, yet with her white petals and green fronds she might have been a lily too—only an artificial lily, wonderfully imitated and constantly kept, without dust or stain, though not exempt from a slight droop and a complexity of faint creases, under some clear glass bell. The perfection of household care, of high polish and finish, always reigned in her rooms, but they now looked most as if everything had been wound up, tucked in, put away, so that she might sit with folded hands and with nothing more to do. She was “out of it,” to Marcher’s vision; her work was over; she communicated with him as across some gulf or from some island of rest that she had already reached, and it made him feel strangely abandoned. Was it—or rather wasn’t it—that if for so long she had been watching with him the answer to their question must have swum into her ken and taken on its name, so that her occupation was verily gone? He had as much as charged her with this in saying to her, many months before, that she even then knew something she was keeping from him. It was a point he had never since ventured to press, vaguely fearing as he did that it might become a difference, perhaps a disagreement, between them. He had in this later time turned nervous, which was what he in all the other years had never been; and the oddity was that his nervousness should have waited till he had begun to doubt, should have held off so long as he was sure. There was something, it seemed to him, that the wrong word would bring down on his head, something that would so at least ease off his tension. But he wanted not to speak the wrong word; that would make everything ugly. He wanted the knowledge he lacked to drop on him, if drop it could, by its own august weight. If she was to forsake him it was surely for her to take leave. This was why he didn’t directly ask her again what she knew; but it was also why, approaching the matter from another side, he said to her in the course of his visit: “What do you regard as the very worst that at this time of day *can* happen to me?”

He had asked her that in the past often enough; they had, with the odd irregular rhythm of their intensities and avoidances, exchanged ideas about it and then had seen the ideas washed away by cool intervals, washed like figures traced in sea-sand. It had ever been the mark of their talk that the oldest allusions in it required but a little dismissal and reaction to come out again, sounding for the hour as new. She could thus at present meet his enquiry quite freshly and patiently. “Oh yes, I’ve repeatedly thought, only it always seemed to me of old that I couldn’t quite make up my mind. I thought of dreadful things, between which it was difficult to choose; and so must you have done.”

“Rather! I feel now as if I had scarce done anything else. I ap-

pear to myself to have spent my life in thinking of nothing *but* dreadful things. A great many of them I've at different times named to you, but there were others I couldn't name."

"They were too, too dreadful?"

"Too, too dreadful—some of them."

She looked at him a minute, and there came to him as he met it an inconsequent sense that her eyes, when one got their full clearness, were still as beautiful as they had been in youth, only beautiful with a strange cold light—a light that somehow was a part of the effect, if it wasn't rather a part of the cause, of the pale hard sweetness of the season and the hour. "And yet," she said at last, "there are horrors we've mentioned."

It deepened the strangeness to see her, as such a figure in such a picture, talk of "horrors," but she was to do in a few minutes something stranger yet—though even of this he was to take the full measure but afterwards—and the note of it already trembled. It was, for the matter of that, one of the signs that her eyes were having again the high flicker of their prime. He had to admit, however, what she said. "Oh yes, there were times when we did go far." He caught himself in the act of speaking as if it all were over. Well, he wished it were; and the consummation depended for him clearly more and more on his friend.

But she had now a soft smile. "Oh far—!"

It was oddly ironic. "Do you mean you're prepared to go further?"

She was frail and ancient and charming as she continued to look at him, yet it was rather as if she had lost the thread. "Do you consider that we went far?"

"Why I thought it the point you were just making—that we *had* looked most things in the face."

"Including each other?" She still smiled. "But you're quite right. We've had together great imaginations, often great fears; but some of them have been unspoken."

"Then the worst—we haven't faced that. I *could* face it, I believe, if I knew what you think it. I feel," he explained, "as if I had lost my power to conceive such things." And he wondered if he looked as blank as he sounded. "It's spent."

"Then why do you assume," she asked, "that mine isn't?"

"Because you've given me signs to the contrary. It isn't a question for you of conceiving, imagining, comparing. It isn't a question now of choosing." At last he came out with it. "You know something I don't. You've shown me that before."

These last words had affected her, he made out in a moment, exceedingly, and she spoke with firmness. "I've shown you, my dear, nothing."

He shook his head. "You can't hide it."

"Oh, oh!" May Bartram sounded over what she couldn't hide. It was almost a smothered groan.

"You admitted it months ago, when I spoke of it to you as of something you were afraid I should find out. Your answer was that I couldn't, that I wouldn't, and I don't pretend I have. But you had something therefore in mind, and I now see how it must have been, how it still is, the possibility that, of all possibilities, has settled itself for you as the worst. This," he went on, "is why I appeal to you. I'm only afraid of ignorance to-day—I'm not afraid of knowledge." And then as for a while she said nothing: "What makes me sure is that I see in your face and feel here, in this air and amid these appearances, that you're out of it. You've done. You've had your experience. You leave me to my fate."

Well, she listened, motionless and white in her chair, as on a decision to be made, so that her manner was fairly an avowal, though still, with a small fine inner stiffness, an imperfect surrender. "It *would* be the worst," she finally let herself say. "I mean the thing I've never said."

It hushed him a moment. "More monstrous than all the monstrosities we've named?"

"More monstrous. Isn't that what you sufficiently express," she asked, "in calling it the worst?"

Marcher thought. "Assuredly—if you mean, as I do, something that includes all the loss and all the shame that are thinkable."

"It would if it *should* happen," said May Bartram. "What we're speaking of, remember, is only my idea."

"It's your belief," Marcher returned. "That's enough for me. I feel your beliefs are right. Therefore if, having this one, you give me no more light on it, you abandon me."

"No, no!" she repeated. "I'm with you—don't you see?—still." And as to make it more vivid to him she rose from her chair—a movement she seldom risked in these days—and showed herself, all draped and all soft, in her fairness and slimness. "I haven't forsaken you."

It was really, in its effort against weakness, a generous assurance, and had the success of the impulse not, happily, been great, it would have touched him to pain more than to pleasure. But the cold charm in her eyes had spread, as she hovered before him, to all the rest of her person, so that it was for the minute almost a recovery of youth. He couldn't pity her for that; he could only take her as she showed—as capable even yet of helping him. It was as if, at the same time, her light might at any instant go out; wherefore he must make the most of it. There passed before him with intensity the three or four things he wanted most to know; but the

question that came of itself to his lips really covered the others. "Then tell me if I shall consciously suffer."

She promptly shook her head. "Never!"

It confirmed the authority he imputed to her, and it produced on him an extraordinary effect. "Well, what's better than that? Do you call that the worst?"

"You think nothing is better?" she asked.

She seemed to mean something so special that he again sharply wondered, though still with the dawn of a prospect of relief. "Why not, if one doesn't *know*?" After which, as their eyes, over his question, met in a silence, the dawn deepened and something to his purpose came prodigiously out of her very face. His own, as he took it in, suddenly flushed to the forehead, and he gasped with the force of a perception to which, on the instant, everything fitted. The sound of his gasp filled the air; then he became articulate. "I see—if I don't suffer!"

In her own look, however, was doubt. "You see what?"

"Why what you mean—what you've always meant."

She again shook her head. "What I mean isn't what I've always meant. It's different."

"It's something new?"

She hung back from it a little. "Something new. It's not what you think. I see what you think."

His divination drew breath then; only her correction might be wrong. "It isn't that I *am* a blockhead?" he asked between faintness and grimness. "It isn't that it's all a mistake?"

"A mistake?" she pityingly echoed. *That* possibility, for her, he saw, would be monstrous; and if she guaranteed him the immunity from pain it would accordingly not be what she had in mind. "Oh no," she declared; "it's nothing of that sort. You've been right."

Yet he couldn't help asking himself if she weren't, thus pressed, speaking but to save him. It seemed to him he should be most in a hole if its history should prove all a platitude. "Are you telling me the truth, so that I shan't have been a bigger idiot than I can bear to know? I *haven't* lived with a vain imagination, in the most besotted illusion? I haven't waited but to see the door shut in my face?"

She shook her head again. "However the case stands *that* isn't the truth. Whatever the reality, it *is* a reality. The door isn't shut. The door's open," said May Bartram.

"Then something's to come?"

She waited once again, always with her cold sweet eyes on him. "It's never too late." She had, with her gliding step, diminished the distance between them, and she stood nearer to him, close to him, a minute, as if still charged with the unspoken. Her movement

might have been for some finer emphasis of what she was at once hesitating and deciding to say. He had been standing by the chimney-piece, fireless and sparsely adorned, a small perfect old French clock and two morsels of rosy Dresden constituting all its furniture; and her hand grasped the shelf while she kept him waiting, grasped it a little as for support and encouragement. She only kept him waiting, however; that is he only waited. It had become suddenly, from her movement and attitude, beautiful and vivid to him that she had something more to give him; her wasted face delicately shone with it—it glittered almost as with the white lustre of silver in her expression. She was right, incontestably, for what he saw in her face was the truth, and strangely, without consequence, while their talk of it as dreadful was still in the air, she appeared to present it as inordinately soft. This, prompting bewilderment, made him but gape the more gratefully for her revelation, so that they continued for some minutes silent, her face shining at him, her contact imponderably pressing, and his stare all kind but all expectant. The end, none the less, was that what he had expected failed to come to him. Something else took place instead, which seemed to consist at first in the mere closing of her eyes. She gave way at the same instant to a slow fine shudder, and though he remained staring—though he stared in fact but the harder—turned off and regained her chair. It was the end of what she had been intending, but it left him thinking only of that.

“Well, you don’t say—?”

She had touched in her passage a bell near the chimney and had sunk back strangely pale. “I’m afraid I’m too ill.”

“Too ill to tell me?” It sprang up sharp to him, and almost to his lips, the fear she might die without giving him light. He checked himself in time from so expressing his question, but she answered as if she had heard the words.

“Don’t you know—now?”

“‘Now’—?” She had spoken as if some difference had been made within the moment. But her maid, quickly obedient to her bell, was already with them. “I know nothing.” And he was afterwards to say to himself that he must have spoken with odious impatience, such an impatience as to show that, supremely disconcerted, he washed his hands of the whole question.

“Oh!” said May Bartram.

“Are you in pain?” he asked as the woman went to her.

“No,” said May Bartram.

Her maid, who had put an arm round her as if to take her to her room, fixed on him eyes that appealingly contradicted her; in spite of which, however, he showed once more his mystification. “What then has happened?”

She was once more, with her companion's help, on her feet, and, feeling withdrawal imposed on him, he had blankly found his hat and gloves and had reached the door. Yet he waited for her answer. "What was to," she said.

V

He came back the next day, but she was then unable to see him, and as it was literally the first time this had occurred in the long stretch of their acquaintance he turned away, defeated and sore, almost angry—or feeling at least that such a break in their custom was really the beginning of the end—and wandered alone with his thoughts, especially with the one he was least able to keep down. She was dying and he would lose her; she was dying and his life would end. He stopped in the Park, into which he had passed, and stared before him at his recurrent doubt. Away from her the doubt pressed again; in her presence he had believed her, but as he felt his forlornness he threw himself into the explanation that, nearest at hand, had most of a miserable warmth for him and least of a cold torment. She had deceived him to save him—to put him off with something in which he should be able to rest. What could the thing that was to happen to him be, after all, but just this thing that had begun to happen? Her dying, her death, his consequent solitude—*that* was what he had figured as the Beast in the Jungle, that was what had been in the lap of the gods. He had had her word for it as he left her—what else on earth could she have meant? It wasn't a thing of a monstrous order; not a fate rare and distinguished; not a stroke of fortune that overwhelmed and immortalised; it had only the stamp of the common doom. But poor Marcher at this hour judged the common doom sufficient. It would serve his turn, and even as the consummation of infinite waiting he would bend his pride to accept it. He sat down on a bench in the twilight. He hadn't been a fool. Something had *been*, as she had said, to come. Before he *rose* indeed it had quite struck him that the final fact really matched with the long avenue through which he had had to reach it. As sharing his suspense and as giving herself all, giving her life, to bring it to an end, she had come with him every step of the way. He had lived by her aid, and to leave her behind would be cruelly, damnably to miss her. What could be more overwhelming than that?

Well, he was to know within the week, for though she kept him a while at bay, left him restless and wretched during a series of days on each of which he asked about her only again to have to turn away, she ended his trial by receiving him where she had always received him. Yet she had been brought out at some hazard into the presence of so many of the things that were, consciously, vainly, half their past, and there was scant service left in the gen-

tleness of her mere desire, all too visible, to check his obsession and wind up his long trouble. That was clearly what she wanted, the one thing more for her own peace while she could still put out her hand. He was so affected by her state that, once seated by her chair, he was moved to let everything go; it was she herself therefore who brought him back, took up again, before she dismissed him, her last word of the other time. She showed how she wished to leave their business in order. "I'm not sure you understood. You've nothing to wait for more. It *has* come."

Oh how he looked at her! "Really?"

"Really."

"The thing that, as you said, was to?"

"The thing that we began in our youth to watch for."

Face to face with her once more he believed her; it was a claim to which he had so abjectly little to oppose. "You mean that it has come as a positive definite occurrence, with a name and a date?"

"Positive. Definite. I don't know about the 'name,' but oh with a date!"

He found himself again too helplessly at sea. "But come in the night—come and passed me by?"

May Bartram had her strange faint smile. "Oh no, it hasn't passed you by!"

"But if I haven't been aware of it and it hasn't touched me—?"

"Ah your not being aware of it"—and she seemed to hesitate an instant to deal with this—"your not being aware of it is the strangeness *in* the strangeness. It's the wonder of the wonder." She spoke as with the softness almost of a sick child, yet now at last, at the end of all, with the perfect straightness of a sibyl. She visibly knew that she knew, and the effect on him was of something co-ordinate, in its high character, with the law that had ruled him. It was the true voice of the law; so on her lips would the law itself have sounded. "It *has* touched you," she went on. "It has done its office. It has made you all its own."

"So utterly without my knowing it?"

"So utterly without your knowing it." His hand, as he leaned to her, was on the arm of her chair, and, dimly smiling always now, she placed her own on it. "It's enough if I know it."

"Oh!" he confusedly breathed, as she herself of late so often had done.

"What I long ago said is true. You'll never know now, and I think you ought to be content. You've *had* it," said May Bartram.

"But had what?"

"Why what was to have marked you out. The proof of your law. It has acted. I'm too glad," she then bravely added, "to have been able to see what it's *not*."



He continued to attach his eyes to her, and with the sense that it was all beyond him, and that *she* was too, he would still have sharply challenged her hadn't he so felt it an abuse of her weakness to do more than take devoutly what she gave him, take it hushed as to a revelation. If he did speak, it was out of the foreknowledge of his loneliness to come. "If you're glad of what it's 'not' it might then have been worse?"

She turned her eyes away, she looked straight before her; with which after a moment: "Well, you know our fears."

He wondered. "It's something then we never feared?"

On this slowly she turned to him. "Did we ever dream, with all our dreams, that we should sit and talk of it thus?"

He tried for a little to make out that they had; but it was as if their dreams, numberless enough, were in solution in some thick cold mist through which thought lost itself. "It might have been that we couldn't talk?"

"Well"—she did her best for him—"not from this side. This, you see," she said, "is the *other* side."

"I think," poor Marcher returned, "that all sides are the same to me." Then, however, as she gently shook her head in correction: "We mightn't, as it were, have got across—?"

"To where we are—no. We're *here*"—she made her weak emphasis.

"And much good does it do us!" was her friend's frank comment.

"It does us the good it can. It does us the good that *it* isn't here. It's past. It's behind," said May Bartram. "Before—" but her voice dropped.

He had got up, not to tire her, but it was hard to combat his yearning. She after all told him nothing but that his light had failed—which he knew well enough without her. "Before—?" he blankly echoed.

"Before, you see, it was always to *come*. That kept it present."

"Oh I don't care what comes now! Besides," Marcher added, "it seems to me I liked it better present, as you say, than I can like it absent with *your* absence."

"Oh mine!"—and her pale hands made light of it.

"With the absence of everything." He had a dreadful sense of standing there before her for—so far as anything but this proved, this bottomless drop was concerned—the last time of their life. It rested on him with a weight he felt he could scarce bear, and this weight it apparently was that still pressed out what remained in him of speakable protest. "I believe you; but I can't begin to pretend I understand. *Nothing*, for me, is past; nothing *will* pass till I pass myself, which I pray my stars may be as soon as possible. Say, however," he added, "that I've eaten my cake, as you

contend, to the last crumb—how can the thing I've never felt at all be the thing I was marked out to feel?"

She met him perhaps less directly, but she met him unperturbed. "You take your 'feelings' for granted. You were to suffer your fate. That was not necessarily to know it."

"How in the world—when what is such knowledge but suffering?"

She looked up at him a while in silence. "No—you don't understand."

"I suffer," said John Marcher.

"Don't, don't!"

"How can I help at least *that*?"

"Don't!" May Bartram repeated.

She spoke it in a tone so special, in spite of her weakness, that he stared an instant—stared as if some light, hitherto hidden, had shimmered across his vision. Darkness again closed over it, but the gleam had already become for him an idea. "Because I haven't the right—?"

"Don't *know*—when you needn't," she mercifully urged. "You needn't—for we shouldn't."

"Shouldn't?" If he could but know what she meant!

"No—it's too much."

"Too much?" he still asked but, with a mystification that was the next moment of a sudden to give way. Her words, if they meant something, affected him in this light—the light also of her wasted face—as meaning *all*, and the sense of what knowledge had been for herself came over him with a rush which broke through into a question. "Is it of that then you're dying?"

She but watched him, gravely at first, as to see, with this, where he was, and she might have seen something or feared something that moved her sympathy. "I would live for you still—if I could." Her eyes closed for a little, as if, withdrawn into herself, she were for a last time trying. "But I can't!" she said as she raised them again to take leave of him.

She couldn't indeed, as but too promptly and sharply appeared, and he had no vision of her after this that was anything but darkness and doom. They had parted for ever in that strange talk; access to her chamber of pain, rigidly guarded, was almost wholly forbidden him; he was feeling now moreover, in the face of doctors, nurses, the two or three relatives attracted doubtless by the presumption of what she had to "leave," how few were the rights, as they were called in such cases, that he had to put forward, and how odd it might even seem that their intimacy shouldn't have given him more of them. The stupidest fourth cousin had more, even though she had been nothing in such a person's life. She

had been a feature of features in *his*, for what else was it to have been so indispensable? Strange beyond saying were the ways of existence, baffling for him the anomaly of his lack, as he felt it to be, of producible claim. A woman might have been, as it were, everything to him, and it might yet present him in no connexion that any one seemed held to recognise. If this was the case in these closing weeks it was the case more sharply on the occasion of the last offices rendered, in the great grey London cemetery, to what had been mortal, to what had been precious, in his friend. The concourse at her grave was not numerous, but he saw himself treated as scarce more nearly concerned with it than if there had been a thousand others. He was in short from this moment face to face with the fact that he was to profit extraordinarily little by the interest May Bartram had taken in him. He couldn't quite have said what he expected, but he hadn't surely expected this approach to a double privation. Not only had her interest failed him, but he seemed to feel himself unattended—and for a reason he couldn't seize—by the distinction, the dignity, the propriety, if nothing else, of the man markedly bereaved. It was as if in the view of society he had not *been* markedly bereaved, as if there still failed some sign or proof of it, and as if none the less his character could never be affirmed nor the deficiency ever made up. There were moments as the weeks went by when he would have liked, by some almost aggressive act, to take his stand on the intimacy of his loss, in order that it *might* be questioned and his retort, to the relief of his spirit, so recorded; but the moments of an irritation more helpless followed fast on these, the moments during which, turning things over with a good conscience but with a bare horizon, he found himself wondering if he oughtn't to have begun, so to speak, further back.

He found himself wondering indeed at many things, and this last speculation had others to keep it company. What could he have done, after all, in her lifetime, without giving them both, as it were, away? He couldn't have made known she was watching him, for that would have published the superstition of the Beast. This was what closed his mouth now—now that the Jungle had been threshed to vacancy and that the Beast had stolen away. It sounded too foolish and too flat; the difference for him in this particular, the extinction in his life of the element of suspense, was such as in fact to surprise him. He could scarce have said what the effect resembled; the abrupt cessation, the positive prohibition, of music perhaps, more than anything else, in some place all adjusted and all accustomed to sonority and to attention. If he could at any rate have conceived lifting the veil from his image at some moment of the past (what had he done, after all, if not lift it

to her?) so to do this to-day, to talk to people at large of the Jungle cleared and confide to them that he now felt it as safe, would have been not only to see them listen as to a goodwife's tale, but really to hear himself tell one. What it presently came to in truth was that poor Marcher waded through his beaten grass, where no life stirred, where no breath sounded, where no evil eye seemed to gleam from a possible lair, very much as if vaguely looking for the Beast, and still more as if acutely missing it. He walked about in an existence that had grown strangely more spacious and, stopping fitfully in places where the undergrowth of life struck him as closer, asked himself yearningly, wondered secretly and sorely, if it would have lurked here or there. It would have at all events *sprung*; what was at least complete was his belief in the truth itself of the assurance given him. The change from his old sense to his new was absolute and final: what was to happen *had* so absolutely and finally happened that he was as little able to know a fear for his future as to know a hope; so absent in short was any question of anything still to come. He was to live entirely with the other question, that of his unidentified past, that of his having to see his fortune impenetrably muffled and masked.

The torment of this vision became then his occupation; he couldn't perhaps have consented to live but for the possibility of guessing. She had told him, his friend, not to guess; she had forbidden him, so far as he might, to know, and she had even in a sort denied the power in him to learn: which were so many things, precisely, to deprive him of rest. It wasn't that he wanted, he argued for fairness, that anything past and done should repeat itself; it was only that he shouldn't, as an anticlimax, have been taken sleeping so sound as not to be able to win back by an effort of thought the lost stuff of consciousness. He declared to himself at moments that he would either win it back or have done with consciousness for ever; he made this idea his one motive in fine, made it so much his passion that none other, to compare with it, seemed ever to have touched him. The lost stuff of consciousness became thus for him as a strayed or stolen child to an unappeasable father; he hunted it up and down very much as if he were knocking at doors and enquiring of the police. This was the spirit in which, inevitably, he set himself to travel; he started on a journey that was to be as long as he could make it; it danced before him that, as the other side of the globe couldn't possibly have less to say to him, it might, by a possibility of suggestion, have more. Before he quitted London, however, he made a pilgrimage to May Bartram's grave, took his way to it through the endless avenues of the grim suburban metropolis, sought it out in the wilderness of tombs, and,

though he had come but for the renewal of the act of farewell, found himself, when he had at last stood by it, beguiled into long intensities. He stood for an hour, powerless to turn away and yet powerless to penetrate the darkness of death; fixing with his eyes her inscribed name and date, beating his forehead against the fact of the secret they kept, drawing his breath, while he waited, as if some sense would in pity of him rise from the stones. He kneeled on the stones, however, in vain; they kept what they concealed; and if the face of the tomb did become a face for him it was because her two names became a pair of eyes that didn't know him. He gave them a last long look, but no palest light broke.

VI

He stayed away, after this, for a year; he visited the depths of Asia, spending himself on scenes of romantic interest, of superlative sanctity; but what was present to him everywhere was that for a man who had known what *he* had known the world was vulgar and vain. The state of mind in which he had lived for so many years shone out to him, in reflexion, as a light that coloured and refined, a light beside which the glow of the East was garish cheap and thin. The terrible truth was that he had lost—with everything else—a distinction as well; the things he saw couldn't help being common when he had become common to look at them. He was simply now one of them himself—he was in the dust, without a peg for the sense of difference; and there were hours when, before the temples of gods and the sepulchres of kings, his spirit turned for nobleness of association to the barely discriminated slab in the London suburb. That had become for him, and more intensely with time and distance, his one witness of a past glory. It was all that was left to him for proof or pride, yet the past glories of Pharaohs were nothing to him as he thought of it. Small wonder then that he came back to it on the morrow of his return. He was drawn there this time as irresistibly as the other, yet with a confidence, almost, that was doubtless the effect of the many months that had elapsed. He had lived, in spite of himself, into his change of feeling, and in wandering over the earth had wandered, as might be said, from the circumference to the centre of his desert. He had settled to his safety and accepted perforce his extinction; figuring to himself, with some colour, in the likeness of certain little old men he remembered to have seen, of whom, all meagre and wizened as they might look, it was related that they had in their time fought twenty duels or been loved by ten princesses. They indeed had been wondrous for others while he was but wondrous for himself; which, however, was exactly the cause of his haste to renew the wonder by getting back, as he might put it, into his own presence. That had quickened his steps

and checked his delay. If his visit was prompt it was because he had been separated so long from the part of himself that alone he now valued.

It's accordingly not false to say that he reached his goal with a certain elation and stood there again with a certain assurance. The creature beneath the sod *knew* of his rare experience, so that, strangely now, the place had lost for him its mere blankness of expression. It met him in mildness—not, as before, in mockery; it wore for him the air of conscious greeting that we find, after absence, in things that have closely belonged to us and which seem to confess of themselves to the connexion. The plot of ground, the graven tablet, the tended flowers affected him so as belonging to him that he resembled for the hour a contented landlord reviewing a piece of property. Whatever had happened—well, had happened. He had not come back this time with the vanity of that question, his former worrying “*what, what?*” now practically so spent. Yet he would none the less never again so cut himself off from the spot; he would come back to it every month, for if he did nothing else by its aid he at least held up his head. It thus grew for him, in the oddest way, a positive resource; he carried out his idea of periodical returns, which took their place at last among the most inveterate of his habits. What it all amounted to, oddly enough, was that in his finally so simplified world this garden of death gave him the few square feet of earth on which he could still most live. It was as if, being nothing anywhere else for any one, nothing even for himself, he were just everything here, and if not a crowd of witnesses or indeed for any witness but John Marcher, then by clear right of the register that he could scan like an open page. The open page was the tomb of his friend, and *there* were the facts of the past, there the truth of his life, there the backward reaches in which he could lose himself. He did this from time to time with such effect that he seemed to wander through the old years with his hand in the arm of a companion who was, in the most extraordinary manner, his other, his younger self; and to wander, which was more extraordinary yet, round and round a third presence—not wandering she, but stationary, still, whose eyes, turning with his revolution, never ceased to follow him, and whose seat was his point, so to speak, of orientation. Thus in short he settled to live—feeding all on the sense that he once *had* lived, and dependent on it not alone for a support but for an identity.

It sufficed him in its way for months and the year elapsed; it would doubtless even have carried him further but for an accident, superficially slight, which moved him, quite in another direction, with a force beyond any of his impressions of Egypt or of India. It was a thing of the merest chance—the turn, as he

afterwards felt, of a hair, though he was indeed to live to believe that if light hadn't come to him in this particular fashion it would still have come in another. He was to live to believe this, I say, though he was not to live, I may not less definitely mention, to do much else. We allow him at any rate the benefit of the conviction, struggling up for him at the end, that, whatever might have happened or not happened, he would have come round of himself to the light. The incident of an autumn day had put the match to the train laid from of old by his misery. With the light before him he knew that even of late his ache had only been smothered. It was strangely drugged, but it throbbed; at the touch it began to bleed. And the touch, in the event, was the face of a fellow mortal. This face, one grey afternoon when the leaves were thick in the alleys, looked into Marcher's own, at the cemetery, with an expression like the cut of a blade. He felt it, that is, so deep down that he winced at the steady thrust. The person who so mutely assaulted him was a figure he had noticed, on reaching his own goal, absorbed by a grave a short distance away, a grave apparently fresh, so that the emotion of the visitor would probably match it for frankness. This fact alone forbade further attention, though during the time he stayed he remained vaguely conscious of his neighbour, a middle-aged man apparently, in mourning, whose bowed back, among the clustered monuments and mortuary yews, was constantly presented. Marcher's theory that these were elements in contact with which he himself revived, had suffered, on this occasion, it may be granted, a marked, an excessive check. The autumn day was dire for him as none had recently been, and he rested with a heaviness he had not yet known on the low stone table that bore May Bartram's name. He rested without power to move, as if some spring in him, some spell vouchsafed, had suddenly been broken for ever. If he could have done that moment as he wanted he would simply have stretched himself on the slab that was ready to take him, treating it as a place prepared to receive his last sleep. What in all the wide world had he now to keep awake for? He stared before him with the question, and it was then that, as one of the cemetery walks passed near him, he caught the shock of the face.

His neighbour at the other grave had withdrawn, as he himself, with force enough in him, would have done by now, and was advancing along the path on his way to one of the gates. This brought him close, and his pace was slow, so that—and all the more as there was a kind of hunger in his look—the two men were for a minute directly confronted. Marcher knew him at once for one of the deeply stricken—a perception so sharp that nothing else in the picture comparatively lived, neither his dress, his age, nor his presumable character and class; nothing lived but the deep

ravage of the features he showed. He *showed* them—that was the point; he was moved, as he passed, by some impulse that was either a signal for sympathy or, more possibly, a challenge to an opposed sorrow. He might already have been aware of our friend, might at some previous hour have noticed in him the smooth habit of the scene, with which the state of his own senses so scantily consoled, and might thereby have been stirred as by an overt discord. What Marcher was at all events conscious of was in the first place that the image of scarred passion presented to him was conscious too—of something that profaned the air; and in the second that, roused, startled, shocked, he was yet the next moment looking after it, as it went, with envy. The most extraordinary thing that had happened to him—though he had given that name to other matters as well—took place, after his immediate vague stare, as a consequence of this impression. The stranger passed, but the raw glare of his grief remained, making our friend wonder in pity what wrong, what wound it expressed, what injury not to be healed. What had the man *had*, to make him by the loss of it so bleed and yet live?

Something—and this reached him with a pang—that *he*, John Marcher, hadn't; the proof of which was precisely John Marcher's arid end. No passion had ever touched him, for this was what passion meant; he had survived and maundered and pined, but where had been *his* deep ravage? The extraordinary thing we speak of was the sudden rush of the result of this question. The sight that had just met his eyes named to him, as in letters of quick flame, something he had utterly, insanely missed, and what he had missed made these things a train of fire, made them mark themselves in an anguish of inward throbs. He had seen *outside* of his life, not learned it within, the way a woman was mourned when she had been loved for herself: such was the force of his conviction of the meaning of the stranger's face, which still flared for him as a smoky torch. It hadn't come to him, the knowledge, on the wings of experience; it had brushed him, jostled him, upset him, with the disrespect of chance, the insolence of accident. Now that the illumination had begun, however, it blazed to the zenith, and what he presently stood there gazing at was the sounded void of his life. He gazed, he drew breath, in pain; he turned in his dismay, and, turning, he had before him in sharper incision than ever the open page of his story. The name on the table smote him as the passage of his neighbour had done, and what it said to him, full in the face, was that *she* was what he had missed. This was the awful thought, the answer to all the past, the vision at the dread clearness of which he grew as cold as the stone beneath him. Everything fell together, confessed, explained, overwhelmed; leaving him most of all stupefied at the blindness he had cher-



ished. The fate he had been marked for he had met with a vengeance—he had emptied the cup to the lees; he had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened. That was the rare stroke—that was his visitation. So he saw it, as we say, in pale horror, while the pieces fitted and fitted. So *she* had seen it while he didn't, and so she served at this hour to drive the truth home. It was the truth, vivid and monstrous, that all the while he had waited the wait was itself his portion. This the companion of his vigil had at a given moment made out, and she had then offered him the chance to baffle his doom. One's doom, however, was never baffled, and on the day she told him his own had come down she had seen him but stupidly stare at the escape she offered him.

The escape would have been to love her; then, *then* he would have lived. *She* had lived—who could say now with what passion?—since she had loved him for himself; whereas he had never thought of her (ah how it hugely glared at him!) but in the chill of his egotism and the light of her use. Her spoken words came back to him—the chain stretched and stretched. The Beast had lurked indeed, and the Beast, at its hour, had sprung;<sup>1</sup> it had sprung in that twilight of the cold April when, pale, ill, wasted, but all beautiful, and perhaps even then recoverable, she had risen from her chair to stand before him and let him imaginably guess. It had sprung as he didn't guess; it had sprung as she hopelessly turned from him, and the mark, by the time he left her, had fallen where it was to fall. He had justified his fear and achieved his fate; he had failed, with the last exactitude, of all he was to fail of; and a moan now rose to his lips as he remembered she had prayed he mightn't know. This horror of waking—*this* was knowledge, knowledge under the breath of which the very tears in his eyes seemed to freeze. Through them, none the less, he tried to fix it and hold it; he kept it there before him so that he might feel the pain. That at least, belated and bitter, had something of the taste of life. But the bitterness suddenly sickened him, and it was as if, horribly, he saw, in the truth, in the cruelty of his image, what had been appointed and done. He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking Beast; then, while he looked, perceived it, as by a stir of the air, rise, huge and hideous, for the leap that was to settle him. His eyes darkened—it was close; and, instinctively turning, in his hallucination, to avoid it, he flung himself, face down, on the tomb.

1901

1903

1. "She had loved him. With his base safety and shrinkage he never knew. *That* was what might have happened, and what *has* happened is that it

didn't" (From a passage in James' notebooks on "The Beast in the Jungle").



# The Literature of Ideas

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HENRY ADAMS

(1838-1918)

From childhood Henry Adams bore the responsibility of living up to the greatness of his forebears. During the summers he was usually sent from Boston—where he was born on February 16, 1838—to nearby Quincy, where his grandfather, John Quincy Adams, still wielded the national influence and authority that duly follows a former president of the United States. Nearby in Quincy stood the home of John Adams, his great-grandfather. In Quincy young Adams could see famous visiting persons and hear scraps of conversation, often of international import. At home in Boston it was much the same, for his father, Charles Francis Adams, was already taking his independent place in the world as a man of power, preparing himself for national service as a member of Congress, and later, during the Civil War, as minister to England, where his brilliant diplomacy was a factor in the success of the northern cause.

Later, in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907), the author adopted the attitude of one whose education had been use-

less for dealing with the rapidly changing pattern of his age, but he had the best that Boston could offer—the well-stored libraries of his father and grandfather, and private instruction there, followed by Harvard University and the study of law at the University of Berlin. Travel on the Continent proved more attractive than German scholarship to the young man; he sought first-hand knowledge of music and art and the majestic cathedrals. Adams then settled in Washington as secretary to his father, recently elected to Congress, and when Charles Francis Adams became minister to England a short time later, he took his son with him, still as secretary. From London young Adams became a lively contributor to Boston and New York newspapers and to the *North American Review*, disturbing conservatives with an energetic debunking of historical legends—such as that of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith—and upsetting fundamentalists with his insistence on the importance of evolution in the history of civilization.

On his return to Washington in 1868, Adams found himself completely at odds with Reconstruction politics and with the Gilded Age in general; after writing a number of critical articles he accepted an appointment at Harvard, where he taught history (1870-1877). His courses reflected his growing interest in the Middle Ages, which later bore fruit in his writing, but he also kept in touch with the present as editor of the *North American Review*. His "dynamic theory of history" as a science began to take shape, but it was not until later that he found what was for him the answer in the laws of physical science.

In 1872 Adams married Marian Hooper, the attractive daughter of a prominent Boston physician, and heiress to a fortune; after a year in Europe they returned to Harvard, where he taught until 1877. He next settled in Washington, apparently fascinated again by history in the making, becoming, as he said, "stable-companion to statesmen," among whom William Evarts and John Hay were his intimates. His interest in important associates of Thomas Jefferson produced his collection of *The Writings of Albert Gallatin* (1879) and a biography of Gallatin the same year. His anonymous novel, *Democracy* (1880), a satire upon corruption in national government and social life, was followed by a biography, *John Randolph* (1882). Many of Adams' own critical ideas appear in his novel *Esther* (1884), in which his wife probably served as model for the heroine; the significance of this

is heightened by the suicide of Mrs. Adams in 1885, a crushing tragedy from which he never fully recovered. He first sought escape in a long journey through the Orient, then resumed his monumental undertaking, not completed until 1891, *The History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison*, in nine volumes. Thereafter Adams continued his writing through restless wanderings; *Historical Essays* (1891) and *Memoirs of Marau Taaroa, Last Queen of Tahiti* (1893) resulted from travel and research. More and more he saw history in terms of energy and force; he sought analogues in the physical sciences and consulted the scientists who were his friends. As he later explained in *The Education of Henry Adams*, and especially in the chapter entitled "The Dynamo and the Virgin," the scientific exhibits at the expositions in Chicago in 1893, and at Paris in 1900, were a concrete revelation of what he sought to know. The huge electro-dynamos became a symbol of the dawning age, in which "the human race may commit suicide by blowing up the world," as he prophetically foresaw in the *Education*. He now began to regard human thought, and hence the currents of history, as energetic forces, comparable to those physical energies described by the laws of thermodynamics, responding to similar laws of attraction and repulsion, acceleration, and dissipation. The significance of his theory for historians he succinctly expressed in "A Letter to American Teachers of History" (1910), re-

printed by his brother, Brooks Adams, in *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (1919).

The earliest literary fruit of Adams' theory was a masterpiece, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1904), which he called "a study of thirteenth-century unity," by contrast with his own age to be revealed in the *Education*—"a study of twentieth-century multiplicity." The power of the earlier age was the spiritual unity of philosophy, art, and vision that built the cathedrals, symbols of the Virgin; his own age presented no unity save the still-unsolved enigma of the atom. Never popular, Henry Adams was a sound scholar and a sincere artist, one whose message may be reconsidered today in the light of events not foreseen by his contemporaries.

There is no collected edition of Henry Adams. His most important works are *Democracy: An American Novel*, 1880, reprinted 1952; *Esther: A Novel*, 1884, reprinted with an introduction by Rob-

ert E. Spiller, 1938; *History of the United States of America during the Administration of Thomas Jefferson* 1884-1885, and *History of the United States of America during the Administration of James Madison*, 1888-1889, both privately printed, published in 9 vols., 1889-1891, reprinted in 4 vols., with an introduction by Henry S. Commager, 1930, and condensed by Herbert Agar as *The Formative Years*, 1947; *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, 1904, reprinted 1936; *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography*, privately printed 1907, published 1918, reprinted frequently; *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, 1919, reprinted 1949; *Travels in Tahiti*, edited by Robert E. Spiller, 1947. Worthington C. Ford edited *A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865*, 2 vols., 1920, *Letters of Henry Adams, 1858-1891*, 1930, and *Letters of Henry Adams, 1892-1918*, 1938; Harold D. Cater edited *Henry Adams and His Friends: A Collection of His Unpublished Letters*, 1947. Newton Arvin edited *The Selected Letters of Henry Adams*, 1951.

Biographies are James Truslow Adams, *Henry Adams*, 1933; Ernest Samuels, *The Young Henry Adams*, 1948, and *Henry Adams: The Middle Years, 1877-1891*, 1958; Robert A. Hume, *Runaway Star: An Appreciation of Henry Adams*, 1951; Elizabeth Stevenson, *Henry Adams, A Biography*, 1955; and J. C. Levenson, *The Mind and Art of Henry Adams*, 1957.

## The Dynamo and the Virgin<sup>9</sup>

Until the Great Exposition of 1900<sup>1</sup> closed its doors in November, Adams haunted it, aching to absorb knowledge, and helpless to find it. He would have liked to know how much of it could have been grasped by the best-informed man in the world. While he was thus meditating chaos, Langley<sup>2</sup> came by, and showed it to him. At Langley's behest, the Exhibition dropped its superfluous rags and

9. Chapter 25 of *The Education of Henry Adams*, written after Adams had seen the dynamos at the Paris Exposition of 1900. Like Eugene O'Neill, who later treated a similar theme dramatically in *Dynamo*, Adams saw physical power replacing the spiritual idealism symbolized for the Middle Ages in the power of the Virgin. Hence the chapter is one expression of the author's "dynamic theory of history," which

attempts to explain history as the power of ideas functioning as force, controlled by laws analogous to the physical laws of thermodynamics.

1. Held in Paris.

2. Samuel Pierpont Langley (1834-1906), American physicist, who made important investigations in aeronautics and in the exploration of the solar spectrum.

stripped itself to the skin, for Langley knew what to study, and why, and how; while Adams might as well have stood outside in the night, staring at the Milky Way. Yet Langley said nothing new, and taught nothing that one might not have learned from Lord Bacon,<sup>3</sup> three hundred years before; but though one should have known the *Advancement of Science*<sup>4</sup> as well as one knew the *Comedy of Errors*, the literary knowledge counted for nothing until some teacher should show how to apply it. Bacon took a vast deal of trouble in teaching King James I and his subjects, American or other, towards the year 1620,<sup>5</sup> that true science was the development or economy of forces; yet an elderly American in 1900 knew neither the formula nor the forces; or even so much as to say to himself that his historical business in the Exposition concerned only the economies or developments of force since 1893, when he began the study at Chicago.<sup>6</sup>

Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts. Adams had looked at most of the accumulations of art in the storehouses called Art Museums; yet he did not know how to look at the art exhibits of 1900. He had studied Karl Marx and his doctrines of history<sup>7</sup> with profound attention, yet he could not apply them at Paris. Langley, with the ease of a great master of experiment, threw out of the field every exhibit that did not reveal a new application of force, and naturally threw out, to begin with, almost the whole art exhibit. Equally, he ignored almost the whole industrial exhibit. He led his pupil directly to the forces. His chief interest was in new motors to make his airship feasible, and he taught Adams the astonishing complexities of the Daimler<sup>8</sup> motor, and of the automobile, which, since 1893, had become a nightmare at a hundred kilometres an hour, almost as destructive as the electric tram which was only ten years older; and threatening to become as terrible as the locomotive steam-engine itself, which was almost exactly Adams's own age.

Then he showed his scholar the great hall of dynamos, and explained how little he knew about electricity or force of any kind, even of his own special sun, which spouted heat in inconceivable volume, but which, as far as he knew, might spout less or more, at any time, for all the certainty he felt in it. To him, the dynamo itself was but an ingenious channel for conveying somewhere the heat latent in a few tons of poor coal hidden in a dirty engine-house carefully kept out of sight; but to Adams the dynamo became a

3. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), British statesman and philosopher, a pioneer of modern inductive science.

4. Adams has in mind Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* (1605).

5. Date of Bacon's *Novum Organum*.

6. The Columbian Exposition at Chicago (1893), where large technological exhibits were displayed.

7. Karl Marx (1818-1883), German economist who promulgated doctrines basic to modern Communism. *Das Kapital* is his classic expression of socialist economics and "doctrines of history" based on materialistic forces.

8. Gottlieb Daimler (1834-1900), German inventor of a high-speed internal-combustion engine.

symbol of infinity. As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm's-length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring—scarcely humming an audible warning to stand a hair's-breadth further for respect of power—while it would not wake the baby lying close against its frame. Before the end, one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force. Among the thousand symbols of ultimate energy, the dynamo was not so human as some, but it was the most expressive.

Yet the dynamo, next to the steam-engine, was the most familiar of exhibits. For Adams's objects its value lay chiefly in its occult mechanism. Between the dynamo in the gallery of machines and the engine-house outside, the break of continuity amounted to abysmal fracture for a historian's objects. No more relation could he discover between the steam and the electric current than between the Cross and the cathedral. The forces were interchangeable if not reversible, but he could see only an absolute *fiat* in electricity as in faith. Langley could not help him. Indeed, Langley seemed to be worried by the same trouble, for he constantly repeated that the new forces were anarchical, and especially that he was not responsible for the new rays, that were little short of parricidal in their wicked spirit towards science. His own rays, with which he had doubled the solar spectrum, were altogether harmless and beneficent; but Radium denied its God<sup>9</sup>—or what was to Langley the same thing, denied the truths of his Science. The force was wholly new.

A historian who asked only to learn enough to be as futile as Langley or Kelvin,<sup>1</sup> made rapid progress under this teaching, and mixed himself up in the tangle of ideas until he achieved a sort of Paradise of ignorance vastly consoling to his fatigued senses. He wrapped himself in vibrations and rays which were new, and he would have hugged Marconi<sup>2</sup> and Branly<sup>3</sup> had he met them, as he hugged the dynamo; while he lost his arithmetic in trying to figure out the equation between the discoveries and the economies of force. The economies, like the discoveries, were absolute, super-sensual, occult; incapable of expression in horse-power. What mathematical equivalent could he suggest as the value of a Branly coherer? Frozen air, or the electric furnace, had some scale of measurement,

9. Research in radium, with its "rays," was the first source of knowledge of the disintegration of atoms.

1. William Thomson, Lord Kelvin (1824-1907), British physicist who made important contributions to electrodynamics and transatlantic telegra-

phy.

2. Marchese Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937), Italian inventor of the wireless telegraph.

3. Edouard Branly (1846-1940), French inventor of the first practical detector for wireless waves.

no doubt, if somebody could invent a thermometer adequate to the purpose; but X-rays had played no part whatever in man's consciousness, and the atom itself had figured only as a fiction of thought. In these seven years man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old. He had entered a supersensual world, in which he could measure nothing except by chance collisions of movements imperceptible to his senses, perhaps even imperceptible to his instruments, but perceptible to each other, and so to some known ray at the end of the scale. Langley seemed prepared for anything, even for an indeterminable number of universes interfused—physics stark mad in metaphysics.

Historians undertake to arrange sequences,—called stories, or histories—assuming in silence a relation of cause and effect. These assumptions, hidden in the depths of dusty libraries, have been astounding, but commonly unconscious and childlike; so much so, that if any captious critic were to drag them to light, historians would probably reply, with one voice, that they had never supposed themselves required to know what they were talking about. Adams, for one, had toiled in vain to find out what he meant. He had even published a dozen volumes of American history for no other purpose than to satisfy himself whether, by the severest process of stating, with the least possible comment, such facts as seemed sure, in such order as seemed rigorously consequent, he could fix for a familiar moment a necessary sequence of human movement. The result had satisfied him as little as at Harvard College. Where he saw sequence, other men saw something quite different, and no one saw the same unit of measure. He cared little about his experiments and less about his statesmen, who seemed to him quite as ignorant as himself and, as a rule, no more honest; but he insisted on a relation of sequence, and if he could not reach it by one method, he would try as many methods as science knew. Satisfied that the sequence of men led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further, while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos, he turned at last to the sequence of force; and thus it happened that, after ten years' pursuit, he found himself lying in the Gallery of Machines at the Great Exposition of 1900, his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new.

Since no one else showed much concern, an elderly person without other cares had no need to betray alarm. The year 1900 was not the first to upset schoolmasters. Copernicus and Galileo<sup>4</sup> had broken

4. Copernicus (1473–1543), Polish astronomer who promulgated the theory that the earth rotates in an orbit around the sun; Galileo (1564–1642).

Italian astronomer and physicist, reaffirmed the Copernican system, although required to recant by the Inquisition.

many professorial necks about 1600; Columbus had stood the world on its head towards 1500; but the nearest approach to the revolution of 1900 was that of 310, when Constantine<sup>5</sup> set up the Cross. The rays that Langley disowned, as well as those which he fathered, were occult, supersensual, irrational; they were a revelation of mysterious energy like that of the Cross; they were what, in terms of mediæval science, were called immediate modes of the divine substance.

The historian was thus reduced to his last resources. Clearly if he was bound to reduce all these forces to a common value, this common value could have no measure but that of their attraction on his own mind. He must treat them as they had been felt; as convertible, reversible, interchangeable attractions on thought. He made up his mind to venture it; he would risk translating rays into faith. Such a reversible process would vastly amuse a chemist, but the chemist could not deny that he, or some of his fellow physicists, could feel the force of both. When Adams was a boy in Boston, the best chemist in the place had probably never heard of Venus except by way of scandal, or of the Virgin except as idolatry; neither had he heard of dynamos or automobiles or radium; yet his mind was ready to feel the force of all, though the rays were unborn and the women were dead.

Here opened another totally new education, which promised to be by far the most hazardous of all. The knife-edge along which he must crawl, like Sir Lancelot in the twelfth century,<sup>6</sup> divided two kingdoms of force which had nothing in common but attraction. They were as different as a magnet is from gravitation, supposing one knew what a magnet was, or gravitation, or love. The force of the Virgin was still felt at Lourdes,<sup>7</sup> and seemed to be as potent as X-rays; but in America neither Venus nor Virgin ever had value as force—at most as sentiment. No American had ever been truly afraid of either.

This problem in dynamics gravely perplexed an American historian. The Woman had once been supreme; in France she still seemed potent, not merely as a sentiment, but as a force. Why was she unknown in America? For evidently America was ashamed of her, and she was ashamed herself, otherwise they would not have strewn fig-leaves so profusely all over her. When she was a true force, she was ignorant of fig-leaves, but the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been

5. According to legend, the Roman emperor Constantine (280?–337) saw a vision of the Cross, bearing the words, "In this sign conquer," and proclaimed Christianity throughout the Roman world.

6. Thus Lancelot freed Guinevere im-

prisoned in a castle, in Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la Charrette*.

7. A French town at the foot of the Pyrenees, visited by pilgrims for its spring of healing waters, where a peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, had a vision of the Virgin Mary.



recognized by Adam. The trait was notorious, and often humorous, but any one brought up among Puritans knew that sex was sin. In any previous age, sex was strength. Neither art nor beauty was needed. Every one, even among Puritans, knew that neither Diana of the Ephesians nor any of the Oriental goddesses was worshipped for her beauty. She was goddess because of her force; she was the animated dynamo; she was reproduction—the greatest and most mysterious of all energies; all she needed was to be fecund. Singularly enough, not one of Adams's many schools of education had ever drawn his attention to the opening lines of Lucretius, though they were perhaps the finest in all Latin Literature, where the poet invoked Venus exactly as Dante invoked the Virgin:—

'Quæ quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas.'<sup>8</sup>

The Venus of Epicurean philosophy survived in the Virgin of the Schools:

'Donna, sei tanto grande, e tanto vali,  
Che qual vuol grazia, e a te non ricorre,  
Sua disianza vuol volar senz' ali.'<sup>9</sup>

All this was to American thought as though it had never existed. The true American knew something of the facts, but nothing of the feelings; he read the letter, but he never felt the law. Before this historical chasm, a mind like that of Adams felt itself helpless; he turned from the Virgin to the Dynamo as though he were a Branly coherer. On one side, at the Louvre and at Chartres, as he knew by the record of work actually done and still before his eyes, was the highest energy ever known to man, the creator of four-fifths of his noblest art, exercising vastly more attraction over the human mind than all the steam-engines and dynamos ever dreamed of; and yet this energy was unknown to the American mind. An American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist.

The question, which to any plain American of the nineteenth century seemed as remote as it did to Adams, drew him almost violently to study, once it was posed; and on this point Langleys were as useless as though they were Herbert Spencers<sup>1</sup> or dynamos. The idea survived only as art. There one turned as naturally as though the artist were himself a woman. Adams began to ponder, asking himself whether he knew of any American artist who had

8. "Thou, since thou alone dost govern the nature of things" (*De Rerum Natura*, Book I, 21, by Lucretius, 95-51? B.C., Roman poet and Epicurean philosopher).

9. "Lady, thou art so great in all things / That he who wishes grace, and

seeks not thee, / Would have his wish fly upwards without wings" (Dante, *Paradiso*, xxxiii, 13-15).

1. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), English thinker, welcomed Darwinism and coined the phrase "survival of the fittest."

ever insisted on the power of sex, as every classic had always done; but he could think only of Walt Whitman; Bret Harte, as far as the magazines would let him venture; and one or two painters, for the flesh-tones. All the rest had used sex for sentiment, never for force; to them, Eve was a tender flower, and Herodias<sup>2</sup> an unfeminine horror. American art, like the American language and American education, was as far as possible sexless. Society regarded this victory over sex as its greatest triumph, and the historian readily admitted it, since the moral issue, for the moment, did not concern one who was studying the relations of unmoral force. He cared nothing for the sex of the dynamo until he could measure its energy.

Vaguely seeking a clue, he wandered through the art exhibit, and, in his stroll, stopped almost every day before Saint-Gaudens's General Sherman,<sup>3</sup> which had been given the central post of honor. Saint-Gaudens himself was in Paris, putting on the work his usual interminable last touches, and listening to the usual contradictory suggestions of brother sculptors. Of all the American artists who gave to American art whatever life it breathed in the seventies, Saint-Gaudens was perhaps the most sympathetic, but certainly the most inarticulate. General Grant or Don Cameron<sup>4</sup> had scarcely less instinct of rhetoric than he. All the others—the Hunts, Richardson, John La Farge, Stanford White<sup>5</sup>—were exuberant; only Saint-Gaudens could never discuss or dilate on an emotion, or suggest artistic arguments for giving to his work the forms that he felt. He never laid down the law, or affected the despot, or became brutalized like Whistler<sup>6</sup> by the brutalities of his world. He required no incense; he was no egoist; his simplicity of thought was excessive; he could not imitate, or give any form but his own to the creations of his hand. No one felt more strongly than he the strength of other men, but the idea that they could affect him never stirred an image in his mind.

This summer his health was poor and his spirits were low. For such a temper, Adams was not the best companion, since his own gaiety was not *folle*; but he risked going now and then to the studio on Mont Parnasse to draw him out for a stroll in the Bois de

2. Lustful wife of King Herod, responsible for the death of John the Baptist. Cf. Mark vi: 17–28.

3. Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), Irish-born American sculptor; he created the memorial in Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, D. C., which Henry Adams erected to his wife. The Sherman statue on the Fifth Avenue Plaza in New York commemorates General William T. Sherman of Civil War fame.

4. James Donald Cameron (1833–1918), secretary of war in Grant's

cabinet.

5. William Morris Hunt (1824–1879), Vermont painter, and his brother Richard Morris Hunt (1828–1895), architect; Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–1886), New York architect; John La Farge (1835–1910), New York artist and author, who accompanied Adams to the South Seas in 1886; Stanford White (1853–1906), New York architect.

6. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), American portrait and landscape painter.

Boulogne, or dinner as pleased his moods, and in return Saint-Gaudens sometimes let Adams go about in his company.

Once Saint-Gaudens took him down to Amiens, with a party of Frenchmen, to see the cathedral. Not until they found themselves actually studying the sculpture of the western portal, did it dawn on Adams's mind that, for his purposes, Saint-Gaudens on that spot had more interest to him than the cathedral itself. Great men before great monuments express great truths, provided they are not taken too solemnly. Adams never tired of quoting the supreme phrase of his idol Gibbon,<sup>7</sup> before the Gothic cathedrals: "I darted a contemptuous look on the stately monuments of superstition." Even in the footnotes of his history, Gibbon had never inserted a bit of humor more human than this, and one would have paid largely for a photograph of the fat little historian, on the background of Notre Dame of Amiens, trying to persuade his readers—perhaps himself—that he was darting a contemptuous look on the stately monument, for which he felt in fact the respect which every man of his vast study and active mind always feels before objects worthy of it; but besides the humor, one felt also the relation. Gibbon ignored the Virgin, because in 1789 religious monuments were out of fashion. In 1900 his remark sounded fresh and simple as the green fields to ears that had heard a hundred years of other remarks, mostly no more fresh and certainly less simple. Without malice, one might find it more instructive than a whole lecture of Ruskin.<sup>8</sup> One sees what one brings, and at that moment Gibbon brought the French Revolution. Ruskin brought reaction against the Revolution. Saint-Gaudens had passed beyond all. He liked the stately monuments much more than he liked Gibbon or Ruskin; he loved their dignity; their unity; their scale; their lines; their lights and shadows; their decorative sculpture; but he was even less conscious than they of the force that created it all—the Virgin, the Woman—by whose genius "the stately monuments of superstition" were built, through which she was expressed. He would have seen more meaning in Isis<sup>9</sup> with the cow's horns, at Edfoo,<sup>1</sup> who expressed the same thought. The art remained, but the energy was lost even upon the artist.

Yet in mind and person Saint-Gaudens was a survival of the 1500; he bore the stamp of the Renaissance, and should have carried an image of the Virgin round his neck, or stuck in his hat, like Louis XI.<sup>2</sup> In mere time he was a lost soul that had strayed by chance into the twentieth century, and forgotten where it came

7. Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), English historian, author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

8. John Ruskin (1819–1900), English author who wrote on architecture and painting.

9. Egyptian nature goddess.

1. Edfu, city on the upper Nile.

2. French king (1423–1483), who prayed fervently and resorted to astrologers and physicians for guidance during his final years.

from. He writhed and cursed at his ignorance, much as Adams did at his own, but in the opposite sense. Saint-Gaudens was a child of Benvenuto Cellini,<sup>3</sup> smothered in an American cradle. Adams was a quintessence of Boston, devoured by curiosity to think like Benvenuto. Saint-Gauden's art was starved from birth, and Adams's instinct was blighted from babyhood. Each had but half of a nature, and when they came together before the Virgin of Amiens they ought both to have felt in her the force that made them one; but it was not so. To Adams she became more than ever a channel of force; to Saint-Gaudens she remained as before a channel of taste.

For a symbol of power, Saint-Gaudens instinctively preferred the horse, as was plain in his horse and Victory of the Sherman monument. Doubtless Sherman also felt it so. The attitude was so American that, for at least forty years, Adams had never realized that any other could be in sound taste. How many years had he taken to admit a notion of what Michaelangelo and Rubens<sup>4</sup> were driving at? He could not say; but he knew that only since 1895 had he begun to feel the Virgin or Venus as force, and not everywhere even so. At Chartres—perhaps at Lourdes—possibly at Cnidos if one could still find there the divinely naked Aphrodite of Praxiteles<sup>5</sup>—but otherwise one must look for force to the goddesses of Indian mythology. The idea died out long ago in the German and English stock. Saint-Gaudens at Amiens was hardly less sensitive to the force of the female energy than Matthew Arnold at the Grand Chartreuse.<sup>6</sup> Neither of them felt goddesses as power—only as reflected emotion, human expression, beauty, purity, taste, scarcely even as sympathy. They felt a railway train as power; yet they, and all other artists, constantly complained that the power embodied in a railway train could never be embodied in art. All the steam in the world could not, like the Virgin, build Chartres.

Yet in mechanics, whatever the mechanicians might think, both energies acted as interchangeable forces on man, and by action on man all known force may be measured. Indeed, few men of science measured force in any other way. After once admitting that a straight line was the shortest distance between two points, no serious mathematician cared to deny anything that suited his convenience, and rejected no symbol, unproved or unprovable, that helped him to accomplish work. The symbol was force, as a compass-needle or a triangle was force, as the mechanist might prove by losing it,

3. Florentine goldsmith and sculptor (1500–1571); his *Autobiography* celebrates a sexual dynamism.

4. Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), great painter of the Flemish school.

5. Greek sculptor (fourth century B.C.), whose statue of Aphrodite was placed in the temple at Cnidos in Asia Minor.

6. English Victorian poet (1822–1888), who wrote of La Grande Chartreuse, the chief home of the Carthusian order until 1903. There Arnold felt himself, "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born" ("Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," 1855).

and nothing could be gained by ignoring their value. Symbol or energy, the Virgin had acted as the greatest force the Western world ever felt, and had drawn man's activities to herself more strongly than any other power, natural or super-natural, had ever done; the historian's business was to follow the track of the energy; to find where it came from and where it went to; its complex source and shifting channels; its values, equivalents, conversions. It could scarcely be more complex than radium; it could hardly be deflected, diverted, polarized, absorbed more perplexingly than other radiant matter. Adams knew nothing about any of them, but as a mathematical problem of influence on human progress, though all were occult, all reacted on his mind, and he rather inclined to think the Virgin easiest to handle.

The pursuit turned out to be long and tortuous, leading at last into the vast forests of scholastic science. From Zeno to Descartes, hand in hand with Thomas Aquinas, Montaigne, and Pascal,<sup>7</sup> one stumbled as stupidly as though one were still a German student of 1860. Only with the instinct of despair could one force one's self into this old thicket of ignorance after having been repulsed at a score of entrances more promising and more popular. Thus far, no path had led anywhere, unless perhaps to an exceedingly modest living. Forty-five years of study had proved to be quite futile for the pursuit of power; one controlled no more force in 1900 than in 1850, although the amount of force controlled by society had enormously increased. The secret of education still hid itself somewhere behind ignorance, and one fumbled over it as feebly as ever. In such labyrinths, the staff is a force almost more necessary than the legs; the pen becomes a sort of blind-man's dog, to keep him from falling into the gutters. The pen works for itself, and acts like a hand, modelling the plastic material over and over again to the form that suits it best. The form is never arbitrary, but is a sort of growth like crystallization, as any artist knows too well; for often the pencil or pen runs into side-paths and shapelessness, loses its relations, stops or is bogged. Then it has to return on its trail, and recover, if it can, its line of force. The result of a year's work depends more on what is struck out than on what is left in; on the sequence of the main lines of thought, than on their play or variety. Compelled once more to lean heavily on this support, Adams covered more thousands of pages with figures as formal as though they were algebra, laboriously striking out, altering, burning,

7. Zeno of Elea (fifth century B.C.), Greek philosopher whose paradoxes stimulated dialectics; René Descartes (1596-1650), French philosopher and mathematician, father of modern philosophy; St. Thomas Aquinas (1225?-

1274), Italian philosopher and theologian; Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), French essayist and liberal thinker; Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), French mathematician, physicist, and moralist.

experimenting, until the year had expired, the Exposition had long been closed, and winter drawing to its end before he sailed from Cherbourg, on January 19, 1901 for home.

1907

## WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY

(1869-1910)

Moody's birth in 1869 coincided with that of Edwin Arlington Robinson and Edgar Lee Masters. Only one or two years their junior were Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser. Together with the older Hamlin Garland, these may be regarded as the literary generation which first broke the established pattern of the nineteenth century. They were a transitional generation, and the public mind was not yet ready to receive them. Crane died at twenty-nine and Moody at forty-one, but even those who lived experienced the postponement of recognition until after 1910. Moody might later have stood beside his friend Robinson in the poetry of the twentieth century; yet even with his maturity unfulfilled, he holds a permanent place in our literature because from the beginning his poetry was genuine, original, and representative of the problems of the age.

Born in Spencer, Indiana, the son of a steamboat pilot, he was of New England stock, and represents the cultural flux from East to West that characterized his age. The early death of his father threw family responsibilities upon him, and he helped support the family while intermittently attending school. But he was genuinely precocious,

eager for books, especially literature, and filled with the "back-trailing" yearning for the East that then manifested itself in the life of the West, and in the adventures of such authors as Twain, Howells, Garland, and Dreiser. When at nineteen he came to New York State to teach in a college-preparatory school, he had already taught for three winters in the high school at Spencer. On a scholarship and borrowed funds he entered Harvard at twenty, finished the course brilliantly in three years, and was permitted to spend the fourth as a traveling tutor for two boys who visited Greece and the eastern Mediterranean area. In Moody were equally blended the Puritan orthodoxy of his American ancestors and the pagan spirit of Greek beauty; in addition he was deeply concerned with the social and philosophical issues of his age.

Returning from the Mediterranean countries by way of Switzerland and Germany, he received his A.B. from Harvard in 1893, and continued in graduate study. He became an instructor in English in 1894, and the next year accepted a call to join the new and vital English department at the University of Chicago. There he established himself in his profession, pub-

lished studies of English authors, especially Milton, and wrote, with Robert Morss Lovett, an excellent history of English literature. He published a notable edition of Milton's poems, and also edited a volume of Homer and classroom selections of Scott and De Quincey. Meanwhile his poems were appearing in periodicals, representing a sensibility strongly divergent from that prevailing in the period. Although he was an exquisite lyrist, the critical spirit was also very active in his work, whether directed at social problems, as in "Gloucester Moors," or at the contemporary perplexity evoked by new scientific concepts, as in "The Menageric"; or expressed through a new critical symbolism, which became prevalent only much later, as in "Tham-muz." The utilization of myth and anthropology in that poem and others foreshadowed the complex poems of a period that had not yet dawned. On another level he was a brilliant satirist of public affairs, as shown in such poems as "Ode in Time of Hesitation" and "On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines."

In 1900 his philosophical speculation culminated in a poetic drama, *The Masque of Judgment*; in 1901 he published his first collection of *Poems*; in 1903 he ventured to support himself by his pen alone, actuated by the compulsions of new inspiration and by the encouragement of a few friends—Robinson and Percy MacKaye, Josephine Preston Peabody, and others of their New York circle, with whom he spent holidays

whenever he could be free to visit the new literary capital which was forming in Greenwich Village. The remainder of his brief career was spent in the successful creation of two plays, *A Sabine Woman* (1906, revised as *The Great Divide* 1909) and *The Faith Healer* (1909); in the revision of his lyrics; and in the development of his *Masque of Judgment* into a trilogy. In this poetic drama, as in his popular prose plays, Moody attacked the ancient concept of a God of Wrath, and the puritanical belief in man's original depravity, which, as he believed, resulted in a burden of guilt wholly inconsistent with the modern personality and knowledge; he substituted the authority of nature as the source of man's moral sense and his knowledge of God, finding his arguments both in Greek literary thought and in modern science and speculation. Very soon after his marriage, long postponed for economic reasons, he died suddenly in 1910.

John M. Manly edited *The Poems and Plays of William Vaughn Moody*, 1912; Daniel G. Mason edited *Some Letters of William Vaughn Moody*, 1913. A good edition of Moody's best poems is *Selected Poems of William Vaughn Moody*, edited by Robert Morss Lovett, 1931.

A good general study of Moody as poet and dramatist is David D. Henry, *William Vaughn Moody: A Study*, 1934. The fullest treatment of Moody as a dramatist is Arthur H. Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day*, revised edition, 1936, Vol. II, pp. 1-26. See also Sculley Bradley, "The Emergence of the Modern Drama," in *Literary History of the United States*, edited by Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, Thomas H. Johnson, and Henry Seidel Canby, 1948, Vol. II, pp. 1013-1015.

Gloucester Moors<sup>1</sup>

A mile behind is Gloucester town  
 Where the fishing fleets put in,  
 A mile ahead the land dips down  
 And the woods and farms begin.  
 Here, where the moors stretch free  
 In the high blue afternoon, 5  
 Are the marching sun and talking sea,  
 And the racing winds that wheel and flee  
 On the flying heels of June.

Jill-o'er-the-ground is purple blue, 10  
 Blue is the quaker-maid,  
 The wild geranium holds its dew  
 Long in the boulder's shade.  
 Wax-red hangs the cup  
 From the huckleberry boughs, 15  
 In barberry bells the grey moths sup  
 Or where the choke-cherry lifts high up  
 Sweet bowls for their carouse.

Over the shelf of the sandy cove  
 Beach-peas blossom late. 20  
 By copse and cliff the swallows rove  
 Each calling to his mate.  
 Scaward the sea-gulls go,  
 And the land-birds all are here;  
 That green-gold flash was a vireo, 25  
 And yonder flame where the marsh-flags grow  
 Was a scarlet tanager.

This earth is not the steadfast place  
 We landmen build upon;  
 From deep to deep she varies pace, 30  
 And while she comes is gone.  
 Beneath my feet I feel  
 Her smooth bulk heave and dip;  
 With velvet plunge and soft upreel

1. According to Robert Morss Lovett, the poet's friend (*Selected Poems of William Vaughn Moody*, p. 206), this poem had its inception during the summer of 1900, when Moody spent a vacation on Cape Ann, Massachusetts. He was fresh, as he said, from "the heart of the debtor's country," Chi-

cago, where he had been teaching. This is the best known of the poems reflecting his literary connection with social protest and the reform movement. It was published in *Scribner's* for December, 1900, and collected in *Poems* (1901), which the present text follows.



She swings and steadies to her keel  
Like a gallant, gallant ship. 35

These summer clouds she sets for sail,  
The sun is her masthead light,  
She tows the moon like a pinnacle<sup>2</sup> frail  
Where her phosphor wake churns bright. 40  
Now hid, now looming clear,  
On the face of the dangerous blue  
The star fleets tack and wheel and veer,  
But on, but on does the old earth steer  
As if her port she knew. 45

God, dear God! Does she know her port,  
Though she goes so far about?  
Or blind astray, does she make her sport  
To brazen and chance it out?  
I watched when her captains passed: 50  
She were better captainless.  
Men in the cabin, before the mast,  
But some were reckless and some aghast,  
And some sat gorged at mess.

By her battened hatch I leaned and caught  
Sounds from the noisome hold,— 55  
Cursing and sighing of souls distraught  
And cries too sad to be told.  
Then I strove to go down and see;  
But they said, "Thou art not of us!" 60  
I turned to those on the deck with me  
And cried, "Give help!" But they said, "Let be:  
Our ship sails faster thus."

Jill-o'-er-the-ground is purple blue,  
Blue is the quaker-maid, 65  
The alder-clump where the brook comes through  
Breeds cresses in its shade.  
To be out of the moiling street  
With its swelter and its sin!  
Who has given to me this sweet, 70  
And given my brother dust to eat?  
And when will his wage come in?

Scattering wide or blown in ranks,  
Yellow and white and brown,  
Boats and boats from the fishing banks 75

2. Small boat, accessory to a larger vessel, often towed behind.

Come home to Gloucester town.  
 There is cash to purse and spend,  
 There are wives to be embraced,  
 Hearts to borrow and hearts to lend,  
 And hearts to take and keep to the end,—  
 O little sails, make haste!

80

But thou, vast outbound ship of souls,  
 What harbor town for thee?  
 What shapes, when thy arriving tolls,  
 Shall crowd the banks to see?  
 Shall all the happy shipmates then  
 Stand singing brotherly?  
 Or shall a haggard ruthless few  
 Warp<sup>3</sup> her over and bring her to,  
 While the many broken souls of men  
 Fester down in the slaver's pen,  
 And nothing to say or do?

85

90

1900, 1901

### The Menagerie<sup>4</sup>

Thank God my brain is not inclined to cut  
 Such capers every day! I'm just about  
 Mellow, but then—There goes the tent-flap shut.  
 Rain's in the wind. I thought so: every snout  
 Was twitching when the keeper turned me out.

5

That screaming parrot makes my blood run cold.  
 Gabriel's trump!<sup>5</sup> the big bull elephant  
 Squeals 'Rain!' to the parched herd. The monkey scold,  
 And jabber that it's rain water they want.  
 (It makes me sick to see a monkey pant.)

10

I'll foot it home, to try and make believe  
 I'm sober. After this I stick to beer,  
 And drop the circus when the sane folks leave.

3. To move a vessel by hauling on a line attached to a buoy or some other fixed object.

4. Moody resisted the pessimistic determinism of his generation, which reflected the materialistic interpretation of Darwinian evolution, both in smaller poems and on the larger scale of the dramas *The Great Divide* and *The Faith Healer*. In his poetic trilogy, *The Masque of Judgment*, he extended his attack to include the older Christian

fundamentalist orthodoxy with its deterministic dogma of original sin. "The Menagerie" first appeared in *Poems* (1901), from which the present text is taken.

5. The trumpet of the last resurrection (Isaiah xxvii: 13). Gabriel, an archangel, usually a herald or divine messenger, became associated with this trumpet in the Jewish and Christian traditions.

A man's a fool to look at things too near:  
They look back, and begin to cut up queer. 15

Beasts do, at any rate; especially  
Wild devils caged. They have the coolest way  
Of being something else than what you see:  
You pass a sleek young zebra nosing hay,  
A nylghau<sup>6</sup> looking bored and distingué,— 20

And think you've seen a donkey and a bird.  
Not on your life! Just glance back, if you dare.  
The zebra chews, the nylghau hasn't stirred;  
But something's happened, Heaven knows what or where  
To freeze your scalp and pompadour your hair. 25

I'm not precisely an æolian lute<sup>7</sup>  
Hung in the wandering winds of sentiment,  
But drown me if the ugliest, meanest brute  
Grunting and fretting in that sultry tent  
Didn't just floor me with embarrassment! 30

'Twas like a thunder-clap from out the clear,—  
One minute they were circus beasts, some grand,  
Some ugly, some amusing, and some queer:  
Rival attractions to the hobo band,  
The flying jenny,<sup>8</sup> and the peanut stand. 35

Next minute they were old hearth-mates of mine!  
Lost people, eyeing me with such a stare!  
Patient, satiric, devilish, divine;  
A gaze of hopeless envy, squalid care,  
Hatred, and thwarted love, and dim despair. 40

Within my blood my ancient kindred spoke,—  
Grotesque and monstrous voices, heard afar  
Down ocean caves when behemoth<sup>1</sup> awoke,  
Or through fern forests roared the plesiosaur<sup>2</sup>  
Locked with the giant-bat in ghastly war. 45

And suddenly, as in a flash of light,  
I saw great Nature working out her plan;  
Through all her shapes from mastodon to mite  
Forever groping, testing, passing on  
To find at last the shape and soul of Man. 50

6. The large Indian antelope.

7. Usually, "æolian harp"; a stringed musical instrument producing tones when the wind blows across it.

8. A small merry-go-round.

1. See Job xl: 15, where the behemoth

is represented as a sort of colossal hippopotamus.

2. The plesiosaurus was a marine reptile of the age of dinosaurs, having a very long neck, small head, and limbs developed as paddles for swimming.

Till in the fullness of accomplished time,  
 Comes brother Forepaugh,<sup>3</sup> upon business bent,  
 Tracks her through frozen and through torrid clime,  
 And shows us, neatly labeled in a tent,  
 The stages of her huge experiment; 55

Blabbing aloud her shy and reticent hours;  
 Dragging to light her blinking, slothful moods;  
 Publishing fretful seasons when her powers  
 Worked wild and sullen in her solitudes,  
 Or when her mordant laughter shook the woods. 60

Here, round about me, were her vagrant births;  
 Sick dreams she had, fierce projects she essayed;  
 Her qualms, her fiery prides, her crazy mirths;  
 The troublings of her spirit as she strayed,  
 Cringed, gloated, mocked, was lordly, was afraid, 65

On that long road she went to seek mankind;  
 Here were the darkling coverts that she beat  
 To find the Hider she was sent to find;  
 Here the distracted footprints of her feet  
 Whereby her soul's Desire she came to greet. 70

But why should they, her botch-work, turn about  
 And stare disdain at me, her finished job?  
 Why was the place one vast suspended shout  
 Of laughter? Why did all the daylight throb  
 With soundless guffaw and dumb-stricken sob? 75

Helpless I stood among those awful cages;  
 The beasts were walking loose, and I was bagged!  
 I, I, last product of the toiling ages,  
 Goal of heroic feet that never lagged,—  
 A little man in trousers, slightly jagged.<sup>4</sup> 80

Deliver me from such another jury!  
 The Judgment Day will be a picnic to't.  
 Their satire was more dreadful than their fury,  
 And worst of all was just a kind of brute  
 Disgust, and giving up, and sinking mute. 85

Survival of the fittest, adaptation,  
 And all their other evolution terms,  
 Seem to omit one small consideration,

3. Adam Forepaugh was proprietor of a traveling circus and menagerie, popular in the nineties.

4. A slang expression then current for "intoxicated."

To wit, that tumblebugs and angleworms  
Have souls: there's soul in everything that squirms. 90

And souls are restless, plagued, impatient things,  
All dream and unaccountable desire;  
Crawling, but pestered with the thought of wings;  
Spreading through every inch of earth's old mire  
Mystical hanker after something higher. 95

Wishes *are* horses, as I understand.  
I guess a wistful polyp that has strokes  
Of feeling faint to gallivant on land  
Will come to be a scandal to his folks;  
Legs he will sprout, in spite of threats and jokes. 100

And at the core of every life that crawls,  
Or runs or flies or swims or vegetates—  
Churning the mammoth's heart-blood, in the galls  
Of shark and tiger planting gorgeous hates,  
Lighting the love of eagles for their mates; 105

Yes, in the dim brain of the jellied fish  
That is and is not living—moved and stirred  
From the beginning a mysterious wish,  
A vision, a command, a fatal Word:  
The name of Man was uttered, and they heard. 110

Upward along the æons of old war  
They sought him: wing and shank-bone, claw and bill  
Were fashioned and rejected; wide and far  
They roamed the twilight jungles of their will;  
But still they sought him, and desired him still. 115

Man they desired, but mind you, Perfect Man,  
The radiant and the loving, yet to be!  
I hardly wonder, when they came to scan  
The upshot of their strenuousity,  
They gazed with mixed emotions upon *me*. 120

Well, my advice to you is, Face the creatures,  
Or spot them sideways with your weather eye,  
Just to keep tab on their expansive features;  
It isn't pleasant when you're stepping high  
To catch a giraffe smiling on the sly. 125

If nature made you graceful, don't get gay  
Back-to before the hippopotamus;

1154 · William Vaughn Moody

If meek and godly, find some place to play  
 Besides right where three mad hycenas fuss:  
 You may hear language that we won't discuss. 130

If you're a sweet thing in a flower-bed hat,  
 Or her best fellow with your tie tucked in,  
 Don't squander love's bright springtime girding at  
 An old chimpanzee with an Irish chin:  
*There may be hidden meaning in his grin.* 135

1901

Thammuz<sup>5</sup>

Daughters, daughters, do ye grieve?  
 Crimson dark the freshes flow!  
 Were ye violent at eve?  
 Crimson stains where the rushes grow!  
 What is this that I must know? 5

Mourners by the dark red waters,  
 Met ye Thammuz at his play?  
 Was your mood upon you, daughters?  
 Had ye drunken? O how grey  
 Looks your hair in the rising day! 10

Mourners, mourn not overmuch  
 That ye slew your lovely one.  
 Such ye are; and be ye such!  
 Lift your heads; the waters run  
 Ruby bright in the climbing sun. 15

Raven hair and hair of gold,  
 Look who bendeth over you!  
 This is not the shepherd old;  
 This is Thammuz, whom ye slew,  
 Radiant Thammuz, risen anew! 20

1906, 1912

5. Thammuz was a Babylonian god of fertility, corresponding to the Greek Adonis. According to one ancient ritual Thammuz was killed and given water burial by the women in the autumn, and rose again in the spring. Moody may also have in mind the Greek myth of Orpheus, the singer slain by love-crazed nymphs. In editing the works of Milton (Cambridge Edition, p. 395) Moody noted that "when the river Adonis becomes reddened by the mud

[in] the spring torrents, it was believed [that] the flowing afresh of Thammuz's wounds caused the change of color." The poem concerns one of Moody's central themes, more extensively developed in *The Death of Eve* and "I Am the Woman." This poem was first published in *Scribner's* for October, 1906, and was collected in Manly's edition of *The Poems and Plays of William Vaughn Moody* (1912), which the present text follows.



# Realism and Naturalism: The Turn of the Century

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HAMLIN GARLAND

(1860-1940)

Hannibal Hamlin Garland was born in Wisconsin and reared on a succession of pioneer farms in Iowa and South Dakota. An interest in literature turned him toward Boston, where after hard study and near starvation, he secured a teaching position at the Boston School of Oratory. Like many another young realist, Garland came under the influence and inspiration of Howells. After saving for two years, he was able in 1887 to revisit his old home at Osage, Iowa, and his father's home at Ordway, South Dakota; there Garland saw the lonely toil and hardships of the farmer's lot from a new perspective. Brooding and resentful at the waste of life that his family had experienced, Garland began to write immediately after his return to Boston. A second visit in 1889, during which his mother suffered a paralytic stroke resulting from her toil on their treeless farm, deepened his anger. His response may be found in the stories about the hardships of farmers of the Middle Border (the re-

gion of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and the Dakotas), six of which were published as *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), five others being added to later editions. All are realistic protests against the abuses, the toil, and the poverty of the Middle Border frontier in the early days. Garland wanted to record the drudgery and the heroic endurance of that life as it really existed. His stories rank high as regional fiction, yet Garland had no interest in local color or picturesqueness; it was genuineness that he valued.

Often the propagandist in Garland overcame the artist, but even when wrathful, his stories are still dramatic. Through his work there runs a thread of romantic optimism; the most desperate situations are sometimes happily resolved. *Main-Travelled Roads* is unified by Garland's concept that "like the main-travelled road of life [this book] is traversed by many classes of people, but the poor and the weary predominate." Two other

collections were made of his stories during these years—*Prairie Folks* (1893) and *Wayside Courtships* (1897), both later edited to form *Other Main-Travelled Roads* (1910). These thirty stories of his early period, written with a crusading spirit and ethical force, constitute his best fiction. Among these "The Return of a Private" depicts the solitary homecoming of a Union veteran to resume "his daily running fight with nature and against the injustice of his fellow-men"; "Under the Lion's Paw" reveals the bitter plight of an honest, industrious farmer in the grasp of an unscrupulous landlord; "Up the Coolly" dramatically portrays the resentment of a farmer against his brother who has succeeded in the city; and "Among the Corn Rows" is a timeless comedy of love.

Garland believed he could crusade better through the novel than through the short story. *Jason Edwards: An Average Man* (1892) was written to help explain the single-tax theories of Henry George; the account of the rise of the Grange, the Farmers' Alliance, and the Populist party makes *A Spoil of Office* (1892) interesting to the historian, but the novel is little more than campaign material; *A Member of the Third House* (1892) exposes the power of the railroads over legislation. Much better is *A Little Norsk* (1892), the story of a Norwegian orphan girl reared on a bleak, dreary farm, and of her tragic marriage. *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* (1895) depicts a girl's revolt against the monotony of farm

life and her courageous struggles to secure a college education and professional security in Chicago. As his work became more popular, Garland's output declined in quality; he was unable to write of other localities with the same art that he had commanded in portraying the Middle West. *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop* (1902), his first financial success, was followed by *Hesper* (1903) and *Cavanagh, Forest Ranger* (1910).

*A Son of the Middle Border* (1917) an autobiography written in mellow retrospect, dramatizes the roving spirit of the pioneer farmer, and tells the story of his boyhood and youth in the Dakotas, California, and Chicago up to 1893. A sequel dealing with his marriage and literary career in Chicago, *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921), includes the frontier story of his wife's family. This volume, carrying the adventures of his family down to the first World War, was greatly praised and won the Pulitzer Prize. Garland now decided to investigate and record the beginnings of pioneering in his family. *Trail-Makers of the Middle Border* (1926) is partly fictional, but it incorporates an account of the westward journeys of his father from Maine to Wisconsin before 1865, the year in which the narrative of *A Son of the Middle Border*, begins. In 1928 he completed the series with *Back-Trailers from the Middle Border*, which recounts the return to the East of various members of his semifictitious family, representing a typical reaction



among families of the first frontiers.

These four volumes are of genuine literary merit and historical value, but other volumes of Garland's later years are either gossipy memoirs, pot-boilers, or topical works on spiritualism and the like. He remains in literary memory for the enduring value of the early stories of *Main-Travelled Roads*, in which he almost unwittingly contributed to early American naturalism, and for the "Middle Border" series, in which the his-

tory of a family of plain people is given historical and human significance.

There is no collected edition of Hamlin Garland now available, and his individual volumes have not been kept in print. The eleven-volume Border Edition, 1895-1910, has been long out of print. Jean Holloway, *Hamlin Garland: A Biography*, 1960, is a detailed account. Good studies of his work have been made by Arthur H. Quinn, *American Fiction*, 1936, pp. 454-459; and by Clarence Gohdes, in *The Literature of the American People*, by Arthur H. Quinn and others, 1951, pp. 648-651. Walter Fuller Taylor treats the economic aspects of Garland's fiction in *The Economic Novel in America*, 1942, pp. 148-183.

## The Return of a Private<sup>1</sup>

### I

The nearer the train drew toward La Crosse,<sup>2</sup> the soberer the little group of "vets" became. On the long way from New Orleans they had beguiled tedium with jokes and friendly chaff; or with planning with elaborate detail what they were going to do now, after the war. A long journey, slowly, irregularly, yet persistently pushing northward. When they entered on Wisconsin territory they gave a cheer, and another when they reached Madison, but after that they sank into a dumb expectancy. Comrades dropped off at one or two points beyond, until there were only four or five left who were bound for La Crosse County.

Three of them were gaunt and brown, the fourth was gaunt and pale, with signs of fever and ague upon him. One had a great scar down his temple, one limped, and they all had unnaturally large, bright eyes, showing emaciation. There were no bands greeting them at the station, no banks of gayly-dressed ladies waving handkerchiefs and shouting "Bravo!" as they came in on the caboose of a freight train into the towns that had cheered and blared at them on their way to war. As they looked out or stepped upon the platform for a moment, as the train stood at the station, the loafers looked at them indifferently. Their blue coats, dusty and grimy, were too familiar now to excite notice, much less a friendly word.

1. First published in the *Arena* for December, 1890, and included in *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891). The text is taken from the 1891 edition.

2. A city in western Wisconsin, Garland's native state, which he knew from childhood experiences on its frontier.

They were the last of the army to return, and the loafers were surfeited with such sights.

The train jogged forward so slowly that it seemed likely to be midnight before they should reach La Crosse. The little squad grumbled and swore, but it was no use; the train would not hurry, and, as a matter of fact, it was nearly two o'clock when the engine whistled "down brakes."

All of the group were farmers, living in districts several miles out of the town, and all were poor.

"Now, boys," said Private Smith, he of the fever and ague, "we are landed in La Crosse in the night. We've got to stay somewhere till mornin'. Now I ain't got no two dollars to waste on a hotel. I've got a wife and children, so I'm goin' to roost on a bench and take the cost of a bed out of my hide."

"Same here," put in one of the other men. "Hide 'll grow on again, dollars 'll come hard. It's goin' to be mighty hot skirmishin' to find a dollar these days."

"Don't think they'll be a deputation of citizens waitin' to 'scort us to a hotel, eh?" said another. His sarcasm was too obvious to require an answer.

Smith went on: "Then at daybreak we'll start for home—at least, I will."

"Well, I'll be dummed if I'll take two dollars out o' my hide," one of the younger men said. "I'm goin' to a hotel, ef I don't never lay up a cent."

"That'll do f'r you," said Smith; "but if you had a wife an' three young uns dependin' on yeh—"

"Which I ain't, thank the Lord! and don't intend havin' while the court knows itself."

The station was deserted, chill, and dark, as they came into it at exactly a quarter to two in the morning. Lit by the oil lamps that flared a dull red light over the dingy benches, the waiting-room was not an inviting place. The younger man went off to look up a hotel, while the rest remained and prepared to camp down on the floor and benches. Smith was attended to tenderly by the other men, who spread their blankets on the bench for him, and, by robbing themselves, made quite a comfortable bed, though the narrowness of the bench made his sleeping precarious.

It was chill, though August, and the two men, sitting with bowed heads, grew stiff with cold and weariness, and were forced to rise now and again and walk about to warm their stiffened limbs. It did not occur to them, probably, to contrast their coming home with their going forth, or with the coming home of the generals, colonels, or even captains—but to Private Smith, at any rate, there came a sickness at heart almost deadly as he lay there on his hard bed and went over his situation.

In the deep of the night, lying on a board in the town where he had enlisted three years ago, all elation and enthusiasm gone out of him, he faced the fact that with the joy of home-coming was already mingled the bitter juice of care. He saw himself sick, worn out, taking up the work on his half-cleared farm, the inevitable mortgage standing ready with open jaw to swallow half his earnings. He had given three years of his life for a mere pittance of pay, and now!—

Morning dawned **at last**, slowly, with a pale yellow dome of light rising silently above the bluffs, which stand like some huge storm-devastated castle, just east of the city. Out to the left the great river swept on its massive yet silent way to the south. Bluejays called across the river from hillside to hillside through the clear, beautiful air, and hawks began to skim the tops of the hills. The older men were astir early, but Private Smith had fallen at last into a sleep, and they went out without waking him. He lay on his knapsack, his gaunt face turned toward the ceiling, his hands clasped on his breast, with a curious pathetic effect of weakness and appeal.

An engine switching near woke him at last, and he slowly sat up and stared about. He looked out of the window and saw that the sun was lightening the hills across the river. He rose and brushed his hair as well as he could, folded his blankets up, and went out to find his companions. They stood gazing silently at the river and at the hills.

"Looks natcher'l, don't it?" they said, as he came out.

"That's what it does," he replied. "An' it looks good. D'yeh see that peak?" He pointed at a beautiful symmetrical peak, rising like a slightly truncated cone, so high that it seemed the very highest of them all. It was lighted by the morning sun till it glowed like a beacon, and a light scarf of gray morning fog was rolling up its shadowed side.

"My farm's just beyond that. Now, if I can only ketch a ride, we'll be home by dinner-time."

"I'm talkin' about breakfast," said one of the others.

"I guess it's one more meal o' hardtack f'r me," said Smith.

They foraged around, and finally found a restaurant with a sleepy old German behind the counter, and procured some coffee, which they drank to wash down their hardtack.

"Time'll come," said Smith, holding up a piece by the corner, "when this'll be a curiosity."

"I hope to God it will! I bet I've chawed hardtack enough to shingle every house in the coolly.<sup>3</sup> I've chawed it when my lampers was down, and when they wasn't. I've took it dry, soaked, and mashed. I've had it wormy, musty, sour, and blue mouldy. I've had it in little bits and big bits; 'fore coffee an' after coffee. I'm ready

3. Properly "coulee" or "coulée," a deep gulch, usually dry, with sloping sides.

f'r a change. I'd like t' git holt jest about now o' some of the hot biscuits my wife c'n make when she lays herself out f'r company."

"Well, if you set there gablin', you'll never *see* yer wife."

"Come on," said Private Smith. "Wait a moment, boys; less take suthin'. It's on me." He led them to the rusty tin dipper which hung on a nail beside the wooden water-pail, and they grinned and drank. Then shouldering their blankets and muskets, which they were "takin' home to the boys," they struck out on their last march.

"They called that coffee Jayvy,"\* grumbled one of them, "but it never went by the road where government Jayvy resides. I reckon I know coffee from peas."

They kpt together on the road along the turnpike, and up the winding road by the river, which they followed for some miles. The river was very lovely, curving down along its sandy beds, pausing now and then under broad basswood trees, or running in dark, swift, silent currents under tangles of wild grape-vines, and drooping alders, and haw trees. At one of these lovely spots the three vets sat down on the thick green sward to rest, "on Smith's account." The leaves of the trees were as fresh and green as in June, the jays called cheery greetings to them, and kingfishers darted to and fro with swooping, noiseless flight.

"I tell yeh, boys, this knocks the swamps of Louecsiana into kingdom come."

"You bet. All they c'n raise down there is snakes, niggers, and p'rticler hell."

"An' fightin' men," put in the older man.

"An' fightin' men. If I had a good hook an' line I'd sneak a pick'rel out o' that pond. Say, remember that time I shot that alligator—"

"I guess we'd better be crawlin' along," interrupted Smith, rising and shouldering his knapsack, with considerable effort, which he tried to hide.

"Say, Smith, lemme give you a lift on that."

"I guess I c'n manage," said Smith, grimly.

"Course. But, yo' see, I may not have a chance right off to pay yeh back for the times you've carried my gun and hull caboodle.<sup>5</sup> Say, now, gimme that gun, anyway."

"All right, if yeh feel like it, Jim," Smith replied, and they trudged along doggedly in the sun, which was getting higher and hotter each half-mile.

"Ain't it queer there ain't no teams comin' along," said Smith after a long silence.

"Well, no, seein 's it's Sunday."

"By jinks, that's a fact. It is Sunday. I'll git home in time f'r dinner, sure!" he exulted. "She don't hev dinner usially till

about *one* on Sundays." And he fell into a muse, in which he smiled.

"Well, I'll git home jest about six o'clock, jest about when the boys are milkin' the cows," said old Jim Cranby. "I'll step into the barn, an' then I'll say: '*Heah!* why ain't this milkin' done bfore this time o' day?' An' then won't they yell!" he added, slapping his thigh in great glee.

Smith went on. "I'll jest go up the path. Old Rover 'll come down the road to meet me. He won't bark; he'll know me, an' he'll come down waggin' his tail an' showin' his teeth. That's his way of laughin'. An' so I'll walk up to the kitchen door, an' I'll say, '*Dinner f'r a hungry man!*' An' then she'll jump up, an'—"

He couldn't go on. His voice choked at the thought of it. Saunders, the third man, hardly uttered a word. He walked silently behind the others. He had lost his wife the first year he was in the army. She died of pneumonia caught in the autumn rains, while working in the fields in his place.

They plodded along till at last they came to a parting of the ways. To the right the road continued up the main valley; to the left it went over the main ridge.

"Well, boys," began Smith, as they grounded their muskets and looked away up the valley, "here's where we shake hands. We've marched together a good many miles, an' now I s'pose we're done."

"Yes, I don't think we'll do any more of it f'r a while. I don't want to, I know."

"I hope I'll see yeh once in a while, boys, to talk over old times."

"Of course," said Saunders, whose voice trembled a little, too. "It ain't *exactly* like dyin'." They all found it hard to look at each other.

"But we'd ought'r go home with you," said Cranby. "You'll never climb that ridge with all them things on yer back."

"Oh, I'm all right! Don't worry about me. Every step takes me nearer home, yeh see. Well, good-by, boys."

They shook hands. "Good-by. Good luck!"

"Same to you. Lemme know how you find things at home."

"Good-by."

"Good-by."

He turned once before they passed out of sight, and waved his cap, and they did the same, and all yelled. Then all marched away with their long, steady, loping, veteran step. The solitary climber in blue walked on for a time, with his mind filled with the kindness of his comrades, and musing upon the many wonderful days they had had together in camp and field.

He thought of his chum, Billy Tripp. Poor Billy! A "minie" ball<sup>6</sup>

6. A conical bullet with a hollow base which expanded when it was fired. named after its French inventor, C. E. Minié (1814-1879).

fell into his breast one day, fell wailing like a cat, and tore a great ragged hole in his heart. He looked forward to a sad scene with Billy's mother and sweetheart. They would want to know all about it. He tried to recall all that Billy had said, and the particulars of it, but there was little to remember, just that wild wailing sound high in the air, a dull slap, a short, quick, expulsive groan, and the boy lay with his face in the dirt in the ploughed field they were marching across.

That was all. But all the scenes he had since been through had not dimmed the horror, the terror of that moment, when his boy comrade fell, with only a breath between a laugh and a death-groan. Poor handsome Billy! Worth millions of dollars was his young life.

These sombre recollections gave way at length to more cheerful feelings as he began to approach his home coulé. The fields and houses grew familiar, and in one or two he was greeted by people seated in the doorway. But he was in no mood to talk, and pushed on steadily, though he stopped and accepted a drink of milk once at the well-side of a neighbor.

The sun was getting hot on that slope, and his step grew slower, in spite of his iron resolution. He sat down several times to rest. Slowly he crawled up the rough, reddish-brown road, which wound along the hillside, under great trees, through dense groves of jack oaks, with tree-tops far below him on his left hand, and the hills far above him on his right. He crawled along like some minute, wingless variety of fly.

He ate some hardtack, sauced with wild berries, when he reached the summit of the ridge, and sat there for some time, looking down into his home coulé.

Sombre, pathetic figure! His wide, round gray eyes gazing down into the beautiful valley, seeing and not seeing, the splendid cloud-shadows sweeping over the western hills and across the green and yellow wheat far below. His head drooped forward on his palm, his shoulders took on a tired stoop, his cheek-bones showed painfully. An observer might have said, "He is looking down upon his own grave."

## II

Sunday comes in a Western wheat-harvest with such sweet and sudden relaxation to man and beast that it would be holy for that reason, if for no other, and Sundays are usually fair in harvest-time. As one goes out into the field in the hot morning sunshine, with no sound abroad save the crickets and the indescribably pleasant, silken rustling of the ripened grain, the reaper and the very sheaves in the stubble seem to be resting, dreaming.

Around the house, in the shade of the trees, the men sit, smoking, dozing, or reading the papers, while the women, never resting, move

about at the housework. The men eat on Sundays about the same as on other days, and breakfast is no sooner over and out of the way than dinner begins.

But at the Smith farm there were no men dozing or reading. Mrs. Smith was alone with her three children, Mary, nine, Tommy, six, and little Ted, just past four. Her farm, rented to a neighbor, lay at the head of a coulé or narrow gully, made at some far-off post-glacial period by the vast and angry floods of water which gullied these tremendous furrows in the level prairie—furrows so deep that undisturbed portions of the original level rose like hills on either side,—rose to quite considerable mountains.

The chickens wakened her as usual that Sabbath morning from dreams of her absent husband, from whom she had not heard for weeks. The shadows drifted over the hills, down the slopes, across the wheat, and up the opposite wall in leisurely way, as if, being Sunday, they could take it easy also. The fowls clustered about the housewife as she went out into the yard. Fuzzy little chickens swarmed out from the coops where their clucking and perpetually disgruntled mothers tramped about, petulantly thrusting their heads through the spaces between the slats.

A cow called in a deep, musical bass, and a calf answered from a little pen near by, and a pig scurried guiltily out of the cabbages. Seeing all this, seeing the pig in the cabbages, the tangle of grass in the garden, the broken fence which she had mended again and again—the little woman, hardly more than a girl, sat down and cried. The bright Sabbath morning was only a mockery without him!

A few years ago they had bought this farm, paying part, mortgaging the rest in the usual way. Edward Smith was a man of terrible energy. He worked "nights and Sundays," as the saying goes, to clear the farm of its brush and of its insatiate mortgage! In the midst of his herculean struggle came the call for volunteers, and with the grim and unselfish devotion to his country which made the Eagle Brigade able to "whip its weight in wild-cats," he threw down his scythe and grub-axe, turned his cattle loose, and became a blue-coated cog in a vast machine for killing men, and not thistles. While the millionaire sent his money to England for safekeeping, this man, with his girl-wife and three babies, left them on a mortgaged farm, and went away to fight for an idea. It was foolish, but it was sublime for all that.

That was three years before, and the young wife, sitting on the well-curb on this bright Sabbath harvest morning, was righteously rebellious. It seemed to her that she had borne her share of the country's sorrow. Two brothers had been killed, the renter in whose hands her husband had left the farm had proved a villain, one year the farm had been without crops, and now the over-ripe grain

was waiting the tardy hand of the neighbor who had rented it, and who was cutting his own grain first.

About six weeks before, she had received a letter saying, "We'll be discharged in a little while." But no other word had come from him. She had seen by the papers that his army was being discharged, and from day to day other soldiers slowly percolated in blue streams back into the State and county, but still *her* hero did not return.

Each week she had told the children that he was coming, and she had watched the road so long that it had become unconscious, and as she stood at the well, or by the kitchen door, her eyes were fixed unthinkingly on the road that wound down the coulé.

Nothing wears on the human soul like waiting. If the stranded mariner, searching the sun-bright seas, could once give up hope of a ship, that horrible grinding on his brain would cease. It was this waiting, hoping, on the edge of despair, that gave Emma Smith no rest.

Neighbors said, with kind intentions, "He's sick, maybe, an' can't start north just yet. He'll come along one o' these days."

"Why don't he write?" was her question, which silenced them all. This Sunday morning it seemed to her as if she could not stand it longer. The house seemed intolerably lonely. So she dressed the little ones in their best calico dresses and home-made jackets, and closing up the house, set off down the coule to old Mother Gray's.

"Old Widder Gray" lived at the "mouth of the coule." She was a widow woman with a large family of stalwart boys and laughing girls. She was the visible incarnation of hospitality and optimistic poverty. With Western open-heartedness she fed every mouth that asked food of her, and worked herself to death as cheerfully as her girls danced in the neighborhood harvest dances.

She waddled down the path to meet Mrs. Smith with a broad smile on her face.

"Oh, you little dears! Come right to your granny. Gimme a kiss! Come right in, Mis' Smith. How are yeh, anyway? Nice mornin', ain't it? Come in an' set down. Everything's in a clutter, but that won't scare you any."

She led the way into the best room, a sunny, square room, carpeted with a faded and patched rag carpet, and papered with white-and-green-striped wall-paper, where a few faded effigies of dead members of the family hung in variously-sized oval walnut frames. The house resounded with singing, laughter, whistling, tramping of heavy boots, and riotous scufflings. Half-grown boys came to the door and crooked their fingers at the children, who ran out, and were soon heard in the midst of the fun.

"Don't s'pose you've heard from Ed?" Mrs. Smith shook her head. "He'll turn up some day, when you ain't lookin' for 'm." The



good old soul had said that so many times that poor Mrs. Smith derived no comfort from it any longer.

"Liz heard from Al the other day. He's comin' some day this week. Anyhow, they expect him."

"Did he say anything of—"

"No, he didn't," Mrs. Gray admitted. "But then it was only a short letter, anyhow. Al ain't much for writin', anyhow.—But come out and see my new cheese. I tell yeh, I don't believe I ever had better luck in my life. If Ed should come, I want you should take him up a piece of this cheese."

It was beyond human nature to resist the influence of that noisy, hearty, loving household, and in the midst of the singing and laughing the wife forgot her anxiety, for the time at least, and laughed and sang with the rest.

About eleven o'clock a wagon-load more drove up to the door, and Bill Gray, the widow's oldest son, and his whole family, from Sand Lake Coulé, piled out amid a good-natured uproar. Every one talked at once, except Bill, who sat in the wagon with his wrists on his knees, a straw in his mouth, and an amused twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Ain't heard nothin' o' Ed, I s'pose?" he asked in a kind of bellow. Mrs. Smith shook her head. Bill, with a delicacy very striking in such a great giant, rolled his quid in his mouth, and said:

"Didn't know but you had. I heard two or three of the Sand Lake boys are comin'. Left New Orleenes some time this week. Didn't write nothin' about Ed, but no news is good news in such cases, mother always says."

"Well, go put out yer team," said Mrs. Gray, "an' go 'n bring me in some taters, an', Sim, you go see if you c'n find some corn. Sadie, you put on the water to bile. Come now, hustle yer boots, all o' yeh. If I feed this yer crowd, we've got to have some raw materials. If y' think I'm goin' to feed yeh on pic—you're jst mightily mistaken."

The children went off into the fields, the girls put dinner on to boil, and then went to change their dresses and fix their hair. "Somebody might come," they said.

"Land sakes, *I hope* not! I don't know where in time I'd set 'em, 'less they'd eat at the second table," Mrs. Gray laughed, in pretended dismay.

The two older boys, who had served their time in the army, lay out on the grass before the house, and whittled and talked desultorily about the war and the crops, and planned buying a threshing-machine. The older girls and Mrs. Smith helped enlarge the table and put on the dishes, talking all the time in that cheery, incoherent and meaningful way a group of such women have,—a con-

versation to be taken for its spirit rather than for its letter, though Mrs. Gray at last got the ear of them all and dissertated at length on girls.

"Girls in love ain't no use in the whole blessed week," she said. "Sundays they're a-lookin' down the road, expectin' he'll *come*. Sunday afternoons they can't think o' nothin' else, 'cause he's *here*. Monday mornin's they're sleepy and kind o' dreamy and slimsy, and good f'r nothin' on Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday they git absent-minded, an' begin to look off towards Sunday agin, an' mope aroun' and let the dishwater git cold, right under their noses. Friday they break dishes, an go off in the best room an' snivel, an' look out o' the winder. Saturdays they have queer spurts o' workin' like all p'ssessed, an' spurts o' frizzin' their hair. An' Sunday they begin it all over agin."

The girls giggled and blushed all through this tirade from their mother, their broad faces and powerful frames anything but suggestive of lackadaisical sentiment. But Mrs. Smith said:

"Now, Mrs. Gray, I hadn't ought to stay to dinner. You've got—"

"Now you set right down! If any of them girls' beaus comes, they'll have to take what's left, that's all. They ain't s'posed to have much appetite, nohow. No, you're goin' to stay if they starve, an' they ain't no danger o' that."

At one o'clock the long table was piled with boiled potatoes, cords of boiled corn on the cob, squash and pumpkin pies, hot biscuit, sweet pickles, bread and butter, and honey. Then one of the girls took down a conch-shell from a nail, and going to the door, blew a long, fine, free blast, that showed there was no weakness of lungs in her ample chest.

Then the children came out of the forest of corn, out of the creek, out of the loft of the barn, and out of the garden.

"They come to their feed f'r all the world jest like the pigs when y' holler 'poo—ee!' See 'em scoot!" laughed Mrs. Gray, every wrinkle on her face shining with delight.

The men shut up their jack-knives, and surrounded the horse-trough to souse their faces in the cold, hard water, and in a few moments the table was filled with a merry crowd, and a row of wistful-eyed youngsters circled the kitchen wall, where they stood first on one leg and then on the other, in impatient hunger.

"Now pitch in, Mrs. Smith," said Mrs. Gray, presiding over the table. "You know these men critters. They'll eat every grain of it, if yeh give 'em a chance. I swan, they're made o' India-rubber, their stomachs is, I know it."

"Haf to eat to work," said Bill, gnawing a cob with a swift, circular motion that rivalled a corn-sheller in results.

"More like workin' to eat," put in one of the girls, with a giggle. "More eat 'n' work with you."

"You needn't say anything, Net. Any one that'll eat seven cars—"

"I didn't, no such thing. You piled your cobs on my plate."

"That'll do to tell Ed Varney. It won't go down here where we know yeh."

"Good land! Eat all yeh want! They's plenty more in the fiel's, but I can't afford to give you young uns tea. The tea is for us women-folks, and 'specially f'r Mis' Smith an' Bill's wife. We're agoin' to tell fortunes by it."

One by one the men filled up and shoved back, and one by one the children slipped into their places, and by two o'clock the women alone remained around the debris-covered table, sipping their tea and telling fortunes.

As they got well down to the grounds in the cup, they shook them with a circular motion in the hand, and then turned them bottom-side up quickly in the saucer, then twirled them three or four times one way, and three or four times the other, during a breathless pause. Then Mrs. Gray lifted the cup, and, gazing into it with profound gravity, pronounced the impending fate.

It must be admitted that, to a critical observer, she had abundant preparation for hitting close to the mark, as when she told the girls that "somebody was comin'." "It's a man," she went on gravely. "He is cross-eyed—"

"Oh, you hush!" cried Nettie.

"He has red hair, and is death on b'iled corn and hot biscuit."

The others shrieked with delight.

"But he's goin' to get the mitten, that red-headed feller is, for I see another feller comin' up behind him."

"Oh, lemme see, lemme see!" cried Nettie.

"Keep off," said the priestess, with a lofty gesture. "His hair is black. He don't eat so much, and he works more."

The girls exploded in a shriek of laughter, and pounded their sister on the back.

At last came Mrs. Smith's turn, and she was trembling with excitement as Mrs. Gray again composed her jolly face to what she considered a proper solemnity of expression.

"Somebody is comin' to *you*," she said, after a long pause. "He's got a musket on his back. He's a soldier. He's almost here. See?"

She pointed at two little tea-stems, which really formed a faint suggestion of a man with a musket on his back. He had climbed nearly to the edge of the cup. Mrs. Smith grew pale with excitement. She trembled so she could hardly hold the cup in her hand as she gazed into it.

"It's Ed," cried the old woman. "He's on the way home. Heavens an' earth! There he is now!" She turned and waved her hand out toward the road. They rushed to the door and looked where she pointed.

A man in a blue coat, with a musket on his back, was toiling slowly up the hill on the sun-bright, dusty road, toiling slowly, with bent head half hidden by a heavy knapsack. So tired it seemed that walking was indeed a process of falling. So eager to get home he would not stop, would not look aside, but plodded on, amid the cries of the locusts, the welcome of the crickets, and the rustle of the yellow wheat. Getting back to God's country, and his wife and babies!

Laughing, crying, trying to call him and the children at the same time, the little wife, almost hysterical, snatched her hat and ran out into the yard. But the soldier had disappeared over the hill into the hollow beyond, and, by the time she had found the children, he was too far away for her voice to reach him. And, besides, she was not sure it was her husband, for he had not turned his head at their shouts. This seemed so strange. Why didn't he stop to rest at his old neighbor's house? Tortured by hope and doubt, she hurried up the coulé as fast as she could push the baby wagon, the blue-coated figure just ahead pushing steadily, silently forward up the coulé.

When the excited, panting little group came in sight of the gate they saw the blue-coated figure standing, leaning upon the rough rail fence, his chin on his palms, gazing at the empty house. His knapsack, canteen, blankets, and musket lay upon the dusty grass at his feet.

He was like a man lost in a dream. His wide, hungry eyes devoured the scene. The rough lawn, the little unpainted house, the field of clear yellow wheat behind it, down across which streamed the sun, now almost ready to touch the high hill to the west, the crickets crying merrily, a cat on the fence near by, dreaming, unmindful of the stranger in blue—

How peaceful it all was. O God! How far removed from all camps, hospitals, battle lines. A little cabin in a Wisconsin coulé, but it was majestic in its peace. How did he ever leave it for those years of tramping, thirsting, killing?

Trembling, weak with emotion, her eyes on the silent figure, Mrs. Smith hurried up to the fence. Her feet made no noise in the dust and grass, and they were close upon him before he knew of them. The oldest boy ran a little ahead. He will never forget that figure, that face. It will always remain as something epic, that return of the private. He fixed his eyes on the pale face covered with a ragged beard.

"Who *are* you, sir?" asked the wife, or, rather, started to ask, for

he turned, stood a moment, and then cried:

"Emma!"

"Edward!"

The children stood in a curious row to see their mother kiss this bearded, strange man, the elder girl sobbing sympathetically with her mother. Illness had left the soldier partly deaf, and this added to the strangeness of his manner.

But the youngest child stood away, even after the girl had recognized her father and kissed him. The man turned then to the baby, and said in a curiously unpaternal tone:

"Come here, my little man; don't you know me?" But the baby backed away under the fence and stood peering at him critically.

"My little man!" What meaning in those words! This baby seemed like some other woman's child, and not the infant he had left in his wife's arms. The war had come between him and his baby—he was only a strange man to him, with big eyes; a soldier, with mother hanging to his arm, and talking in a loud voice.

"And this is Tom," the private said, drawing the oldest boy to him. "*He'll* come and see me. *He* knows his poor old pap when he comes home from the war."

The mother heard the pain and reproach in his voice and hastened to apologize.

"You've changed so, Ed. He can't know yeh. This is papa, Teddy; come and kiss him—Tom and Mary do. Come, won't you?" But Teddy still peered through the fence with solemn eyes, well out of reach. He resembled a half-wild kitten that hesitates, studying the tones of one's voice.

"I'll fix him," said the soldier, and sat down to undo his knapsack, out of which he drew three enormous and very red apples. After giving one to each of the older children he said:

"Now I guess he'll come. Eh, my little man? Now come see your pap."

Teddy crept slowly under the fence, assisted by the over-zealous Tommy, and a moment later was kicking and squalling in his father's arms. Then they entered the house, into the sitting-room, poor, bare, art-forsaken little room, too, with its rag carpet, its square clock, and its two or three chromos and pictures from *Harper's Weekly* pinned about.

"Emma, I'm all tired out," said Private Smith, as he flung himself down on the carpet as he used to do, while his wife brought a pillow to put under his head, and the children stood about munching their apples.

"Tommy, you run and get me a pan of chips, and Mary, you get the tea-kettle on, and I'll go and make some biscuit."

And the soldier talked. Question after question he poured forth

about the crops, the cattle, the renter, the neighbors. He slipped his heavy government brogan shoes off his poor, tired, blistered feet, and lay out with utter, sweet relaxation. He was a free man again, no longer a soldier under command. At supper he stopped once, listened and smiled. "That's old Spot. I know her voice. I s'pose that's her calf out there in the pen. I can't milk her to-night, though. I'm too tired. But I tell you, I'd like a drink o' her milk. What's become of old Rove?"

"He died last winter. Poisoned, I guess." There was a moment of sadness for them all. It was some time before the husband spoke again, in a voice that trembled a little.

"Poor old feller! He'd 'a' known me a half a mile away. I expected him to come down the hill to meet me. It 'ud 'a' been more like comin' home if I could 'a' seen him comin' down the road an' waggin' his tail, an' laughin' that way he has. I tell yeh, it kind o' took hold o' me to see the blinds down an' the house shut up."

"But, yeh see, we—we expected you'd write again 'fore you started. And then we thought we'd see you if you *did* come," she hastened to explain.

"Well, I ain't worth a cent on writin'. Besides, it's just as well yeh didn't know when I was comin'. I tell you, it sounds good to hear them chickens out there, an' turkeys an' the crickets. Do you know they don't have just the same kind o' crickets down south? Who's Sam hired t' help cut yer grain?"

"The Ramsey boys."

"Looks like a good crop; but I'm afraid I won't do much gettin' it cut. This cussed fever an' ague has got me down pretty low. I don't know when I'll get rid of it. I'll bet I've took twenty-five pounds of quinine if I've taken a bit. Gimme another biscuit. I tell yeh, they taste good, Emma. I ain't had anything like it— Say, if you'd 'a' hear'd me braggin' to th' boys about your butter 'n' biscuits I'll bet your ears 'ud 'a' burnt."

The private's wife colored with pleasure. "Oh, you're always a-braggin' about your things. Everybody makes good butter."

"Yes; old lady Snyder, for instance."

"Oh, well, she ain't to be mentioned. She's Dutch."

"Or old Mis' Snively. One more cup o' tea, Mary. That's my girl! I'm feeling better already. I just b'lieve the matter with me is, I'm *starved*."

This was a delicious hour, one long to be remembered. They were like lovers again. But their tenderness, like that of a typical American family, found utterance in tones, rather than in words. He was praising her when praising her biscuit, and she knew it. They grew soberer when he showed where he had been struck, one ball burning the back of his hand, one cutting away a lock of hair from his tem-

ple, and one passing through the calf of his leg. The wife shuddered to think how near she had come to being a soldier's widow. Her waiting no longer seemed hard. This sweet, glorious hour effaced it all.

Then they rose, and all went out into the garden and down to the barn. He stood beside her while she milked old Spot. They began to plan fields and crops for next year.

His farm was weedy and encumbered, a rascally renter had run away with his machinery (departing between two days), his children needed clothing, the years were coming upon him, he was sick and emaciated, but his heroic soul did not quail. With the same courage with which he had faced his Southern march he entered upon a still more hazardous future.

Oh, that mystic hour! The pale man with big eyes standing there by the well, with his young wife by his side. The vast moon swinging above the eastern peaks, the cattle winding down the pasture slopes with jangling bells, the crickets singing, the stars blooming out sweet and far and serene; the katydids rhythmically calling, the little turkeys crying querulously, as they settled to roost in the poplar tree near the open gate. The voices at the well drop lower, the little ones nestle in their father's arms at last, and Teddy falls asleep there.

The common soldier of the American volunteer army had returned. His war with the South was over, and his fight, his daily running fight with nature and against the injustice of his fellow-men, was begun again.

1890, 1891

## STEPHEN CRANE

(1871-1900)

Among the *avant-garde* writers of the 1890's, Crane was most clearly the herald of the twentieth-century revolution in literature. Had he written *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) or *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) twenty-five years later, he would still have been as much a pioneer as Sherwood Anderson then was. Even more than Garland, Norris, Dreiser, or Robinson—his contemporaries—he made a clean break with the

past in his selection of material, his craftsmanship, and his point of view. It was his nature to be experimental. At twenty he wrote *Maggie*, our first completely naturalistic novel. By the age of twenty-four he had produced, in his earliest short stories and his masterpiece, *The Red Badge of Courage*, the first examples of modern American impressionism. That year, in his collected poems, he was the first to respond to the radical genius

of Emily Dickinson, and the result was a volume of imagist impressionism twenty years in advance of the official imagists. He was in every respect phenomenal. At twenty-two, a failure in newspaper reporting, he was living from hand to mouth and borrowing money to have *Maggie* printed; at twenty-four he was the author of a classic that was then, and still is, a best seller; at twenty-five he was a star feature writer for a great syndicate; and before he reached his twenty-ninth birthday he was dead, leaving writings that filled twelve volumes in a collected edition.

The fourteenth and youngest child of a Methodist minister, Stephen Crane was born on November 1, 1871, in Newark, New Jersey. During his first ten years the family lived in Jersey City, Bloomington, and Paterson, New Jersey and finally in Port Jervis, New York, giving him the experience of small-city and small-town life which he utilized in his *Whilomville Stories*. In 1880 his father died, and after several removals the family settled in 1882 at Asbury Park, a New Jersey resort town. There an older brother, Townley Crane, ran a news-reporting agency, and gave Stephen Crane his first newspaper experience, as a reporter of vacation news. He attended school at nearby Pennington Academy and later at the Hudson River Institute, a military academy at Claverock, New York. His abilities were then chiefly observable on the baseball diamond, and his apprenticeship on small-town sand lots and at preparatory school

led, in college, to brief athletic distinction. After a term each at Lafayette and at Syracuse (1890-1891) he brought his college days to an end, and relieved his family of a financial burden that they could not sustain.

Crane was apparently a born writer, and he turned to newspaper work as the natural and expedient means to earn a living. While in college he had sold sketches to the *Detroit Free Press* and during the summers he had written news for his brother. However, in the three years from 1892 until the publication of *The Red Badge of Courage* he experienced professional difficulty and economic hardship. He was simply not adapted to doing the factual reporting of routine assignments then required of the cub newsman. While still in college, during "two days before Christmas," 1891, he had written the first draft of *Maggie*, but newspaper reporting was something else. Editors were not impressed by news stories in which sense impressions and atmospheric touches triumphed over factual detail. He was reduced to hack writing "on space," placing feature stories individually wherever he could, principally in the *New York Tribune*. In this free-lance experience he came to know the mean streets and the poverty-ridden slums of New York and the adjacent New Jersey cities; indeed, himself very poor, he lived for several years in such places. He had not found a publisher for *Maggie*, now rewritten, and in 1893 he borrowed seven hundred dollars from his brother



and paid for a private printing. In yellow paper wrappers, under the pseudonym of "Johnston Smith" it appeared that year as *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, and it did not sell. But it was noticed by Hamlin Garland, who became the friend of the younger man, helped him to find markets for his sketches, and called the attention of Howells to the serial publication of *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1894. *Maggie* was regularly published in 1896. Crane's professional worries were over, for his high abilities as a feature writer and special correspondent needed only initial recognition to secure him a position in journalism.

Crane's first two novels, and the short stories that he was already writing, were faithful to an expressed creed which, if it came more directly from good journalism than from close study of the European naturalists, produced much the same results in practice. He was convinced that if a story is transcribed in its actuality, as it appeared to occur in life, it will convey its own emotional weight without sentimental heightening, moralizing, or even interpretive comment. This view coincided with what he knew of the objective method by which the French naturalists achieved a correspondence between their style and their materials; and he was initially in agreement with the naturalistic belief that the destiny of human beings, like the biological fate of other creatures, is so much determined by factors beyond the control of individual will or choice that

ethical judgment or moral comment by the author is irrelevant or impertinent. His example, however, found little response until the next century, when Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and many others were illustrating the same viewpoint.

*Maggie* is not a great book, but its terrifying picture of brutality and degradation in the New York slums was unique for its time. *The Red Badge of Courage* employs the same technique to show the actualities of war, in this case, the Battle of Chancellorsville. Written by a man who had had no battle experience but whose imagination quickly absorbed the tales of Civil War veterans and the dramatic reality of Matthew Brady's photographs of combat, the story has continued to convince veterans of two world wars. First appearing in the *Philadelphia Press* in 1894, the following year, with the help of Howells, it was published in book form and was immediately successful. Crane's subsequent experience reporting the Spanish-American and Gracco-Turkish wars for American and British newspapers resulted in such fine volumes as *The Little Regiment* (1896), *The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure* (1898), and *Wounds in the Rain: War Stories* (1900). His tour of the West and Mexico in 1895 resulted in such famous western stories as "The Blue Hotel" and "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." His other major volumes include *George's Mother* (1896), *The Monster and Other Stories* (1899),

*Whilomville Stories* (1900)—the last two being collections of short stories—and his poems: *The Black Riders and Other Lines* (1895) and *War is Kind* (1899).

Threatened with tuberculosis, he settled for a time in England, where he became the friend of Conrad, James, Barrie, Wells, and others, but his ill health demanded further seclusion and he went to Germany, where he died at Badenweiler on June 5, 1900.

The standard editions—*The Works of Stephen Crane*, 12 vols., 1925–1927, and *The Collected Poems of Stephen Crane*, 1930, both edited by Wilson Follett—are now out of print. Robert W. Stallman has edited *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, 1952. *The Sullivan County Sketches of Stephen Crane* was edited by Melvin Schoberlin, 1949, and *Stephen Crane Letters*, 1960, were edited by R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes. Biographies are Thomas Beer, *Stephen Crane: A Study in American Letters*, 1923, and John Berryman, *Stephen Crane*, 1950. E. H. Cady edited C. K. Linson's reminiscences, *My Stephen Crane*, 1958. Daniel G. Hoffman gives a critical evaluation in *The Poetry of Stephen Crane*, 1957. A. W. Williams and Vincent Starrett edited *Stephen Crane: A Bibliography*, 1948.

## The Blue Hotel<sup>1</sup>

### I

The Palace Hotel at Fort Romper was painted a light blue, a shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron, causing the bird to declare its position against any background. The Palace Hotel, then, was always screaming and howling in a way that made the dazzling winter landscape of Nebraska seem only a gray swampish hush. It stood alone on the prairie, and when the snow was falling the town two hundred yards away was not visible. But when the traveller alighted at the railway station he was obliged to pass the Palace Hotel before he could come upon the company of low clapboard houses which composed Fort Romper, and it was not to be thought that any traveller could pass the Palace Hotel without looking at it. Pat Scully, the proprietor, had proved himself a master of strategy when he chose his paints. It is true that on clear days, when the great transcontinental expresses, long lines of swaying Pullmans, swept through Fort Romper, passengers were overcome at the sight, and the cult that knows the brown-reds and the subdivisions of the dark greens of the East expressed shame, pity, horror, in a laugh. But to the citizens of this prairie town and to the people who would naturally stop there, Pat Scully had performed a feat. With this opulence and splendor, these creeds, classes, egotisms, that streamed through Romper on the rails day after day, they had no color in common.

As if the display delights of such a blue hotel were not sufficiently enticing, it was Scully's habit to go every morning and evening to meet the leisurely trains that stopped at Romper and work

1. First published in *Collier's Weekly* for November 26, 1898, and December 3, 1898, and then collected in *The Mon-*

*ster and Other Stories* (1899), and included in *Stephen Crane: an Omnibus*, edited by Robert Stallman.

his seductions upon any man that he might see wavering, gripsack in hand.

One morning, when a snow-crust ed engine dragged its long string of freight cars and its one passenger coach to the station, Scully performed the marvel of catching three men. One was a shaky and quick-eyed Swede, with a great shining cheap valise; one was a tall bronzed cowboy, who was on his way to a ranch near the Dakota line; one was a little silent man from the East, who didn't look it, and didn't announce it. Scully practically made them prisoners. He was so nimble and merry and kindly that each probably felt it would be the height of brutality to try to escape. They trudged off over the creaking board sidewalks in the wake of the eager little Irishman. He wore a heavy fur cap squeezed tightly down on his head. It caused his two red ears to stick out stiffly, as if they were made of tin.

At last, Scully, elaborately, with boisterous hospitality, conducted them through the portals of the blue hotel. The room which they entered was small. It seemed to be merely a proper temple for an enormous stove, which, in the center, was humming with god-like violence. At various points on its surface the iron had become luminous and glowed yellow from the heat. Beside the stove Scully's son Johnnie was playing High-Five<sup>2</sup> with an old farmer who had whiskers both gray and sandy. They were quarrelling. Frequently the old farmer turned his face toward a box of sawdust—colored brown from tobacco juice—that was behind the stove, and spat with an air of great impatience and irritation. With a loud flourish of words Scully destroyed the game of cards, and hustled his son up-stairs with part of the baggage of the new guests. He himself conducted them to three basins of the coldest water in the world. The cowboy and the Easterner burnished themselves fiery red with this water, until it seemed to be some kind of metal polish. The Swede, however, merely dipped his fingers gingerly and with trepidation. It was notable that throughout this series of small ceremonies the three travellers were made to feel that Scully was very benevolent. He was conferring great favors upon them. He handed the towel from one to another with an air of philanthropic impulse.

Afterward they went to the first room, and, sitting about the stove, listened to Scully's officious clamor at his daughters, who were preparing the midday meal. They reflected in the silence of experienced men who tread carefully amid new people. Nevertheless, the old farmer, stationary, invincible in his chair near the warmest part of the stove, turned his face from the sawdust-box frequently and addressed a glowing commonplace to the strangers. Usually he was answered in short but adequate sentences by either

2. A card game popular in the nineties throughout the country, called "cinch" or "double pedro" in the far West.

the cowboy or the Easterner. The Swede said nothing. He seemed to be occupied in making furtive estimates of each man in the room. One might have thought that he had the sense of silly suspicion which comes to guilt. He resembled a badly frightened man.

Later, at dinner, he spoke a little, addressing his conversation entirely to Scully. He volunteered that he had come from New York, where for ten years he had worked as a tailor. These facts seemed to strike Scully as fascinating, and afterward he volunteered that he had lived at Romper for fourteen years. The Swede asked about the crops and the price of labor. He seemed barely to listen to Scully's extended replies. His eyes continued to rove from man to man.

Finally, with a laugh and a wink, he said that some of these Western communities were very dangerous; and after his statement he straightened his legs under the table, tilted his head, and laughed again, loudly. It was plain that the demonstration had no meaning to the others. They looked at him wondering and in silence.

## II

As the men trooped heavily back into the front room, the two little windows presented views of a turmoiling sea of snow. The huge arms of the wind were making attempts—mighty, circular, futile—to embrace the flakes as they sped. A gate-post like a still man with a blanched face stood aghast amid this profligate fury. In a hearty voice Scully announced the presence of a blizzard. The guests of the blue hotel, lighting their pipes assented with grunts of lazy masculine contentment. No island of the sea could be exempt in the degree of this little room with its humming stove. Johnnie, son of Scully, in a tone which defined his opinion of his ability as a card-player, challenged the old farmer of both gray and sandy whiskers to a game of High-Five. The farmer agreed with a contemptuous and bitter scoff. They sat close to the stove, and squared their knees under a wide board. The cowboy and the Easterner watched the game with interest. The Swede remained near the window, aloof, but with a countenance that showed signs of an inexplicable excitement.

The play of Johnnie and the gray-beard was suddenly ended by another quarrel. The old man arose while casting a look of heated scorn at his adversary. He slowly buttoned his coat, and then stalked with fabulous dignity from the room. In the discreet silence of all the other men the Swede laughed. His laughter rang somehow childish. Men by this time had begun to look at him askance, as if they wished to inquire what ailed him.

A new game was formed jocosely. The cowboy volunteered to become the partner of Johnnie, and they all then turned to ask the Swede to throw in his lot with the little Easterner. He asked some questions about the game, and, learning that it wore many

names, and that he had played it when it was under an alias, he accepted the invitation. He strode toward the men nervously, as if he expected to be assaulted. Finally, seated, he gazed from face to face and laughed shrilly. This laugh was so strange that the Easterner looked up quickly, the cowboy sat intent and with his mouth open, and Johnnie paused, holding the cards with still fingers.

Afterward there was a short silence. Then Johnnie said, "Well, let's get at it. Come on now!" They pulled their chairs forward until their knees were bunched under the board. They began to play, and their interest in the game caused the others to forget the manner of the Swede.

The cowboy was a board-whacker. Each time that he held superior cards he whanged them, one by one, with exceeding force, down upon the improvised table, and took the tricks with a glowing air of prowess and pride that sent thrills of indignation into the hearts of his opponents. A game with a board-whacker in it is sure to become intense. The countenances of the Easterner and the Swede were miserable whenever the cowboy thundered down his aces and kings, while Johnnie, his eyes gleaming with joy, chuckled and chuckled.

Because of the absorbing play none considered the strange ways of the Swede. They paid strict heed to the game. Finally, during a lull caused by a new deal, the Swede suddenly addressed Johnnie: "I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room." The jaws of the others dropped and they looked at him.

"What in hell are you talking about?" said Johnnie.

The Swede laughed again his blatant laugh, full of a kind of false courage and defiance. "Oh, you know what I mean all right," he answered.

"I'm a liar if I do!" Johnnie protested. The card was halted, and the men stared at the Swede. Johnnie evidently felt that as the son of the proprietor he should make a direct inquiry. "Now, what might you be drivin' at, mister?" he asked. The Swede winked at him. It was a wink full of cunning. His fingers shook on the edge of the board. "Oh, maybe you think I have been to nowheres. Maybe you think I'm a tenderfoot?"

"I don't know nothin' about you," answered Johnnie, "and I don't give a damn where you've been. All I got to say is that I don't know what you're driving at. There hain't never been nobody killed in this room."

The cowboy, who had been steadily gazing at the Swede, then spoke: "What's wrong with you, mister?"

Apparently it seemed to the Swede that he was formidably menaced. He shivered and turned white near the corners of his mouth. He sent an appealing glance in the direction of the little Easterner. During these moments he did not forget to wear his air of ad-

vanced pot-valor.<sup>3</sup> "They say they don't know what I mean," he remarked mockingly to the Easterner.

The latter answered after prolonged and cautious reflection. "I don't understand you," he said, impassively.

The Swede made a movement then which announced that he thought he had encountered treachery from the only quarter where he had expected sympathy, if not help. "Oh, I see you are all against me. I see—"

The cowboy was in a state of deep stupefaction. "Say," he cried, as he tumbled the deck violently down upon the board, "say, what are you gittin' at, hey?"

The Swede sprang up with the celerity of a man escaping from a snake on the floor. "I don't want to fight!" he shouted. "I don't want to fight!"

The cowboy stretched his long legs indolently and deliberately. His hands were in his pockets. He spat into the sawdust-box. "Well, who the hell thought you did?" he inquired.

The Swede backed rapidly toward a corner of the room. His hands were out protectingly in front of his chest, but he was making an obvious struggle to control his fright. "Gentlemen," he quavered, "I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house! I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house!" In his eyes was the dying-swan look. Through the windows could be seen the snow turning blue in the shadow of dusk. The wind tore at the house, and some loose thing beat regularly against the clapboards like a spirit tapping.

A door opened, and Scully himself entered. He paused in surprise as he noted the tragic attitude of the Swede. Then he said, "What's the matter here?"

The Swede answered him swiftly and cagerly: "These men are going to kill me."

"Kill you!" ejaculated Scully. "Kill you! What are you talkin'?"

The Swede made the gesture of a martyr.

Scully wheeled sternly upon his son. "What is this, Johnnie?"

The lad had grown sullen. "Damned if I know," he answered. "I can't make no sense to it." He began to shuffle the cards, fluttering them together with an angry snap. "He says a good many men have been killed in this room, or something like that. And he says he's goin' to be killed here too. I don't know what ails him. He's crazy, I shouldn't wonder."

Scully then looked for explanation to the cowboy, but the cowboy simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Kill you?" said Scully again to the Swede. "Kill you? Man, you're off your nut."

3. "Pot-valiant" meant "brave only when drunk."

"Oh, I know," burst out the Swede. "I know what will happen. Yes, I'm crazy—yes. Yes, of course, I'm crazy—yes. But I know one thing—" There was a sort of sweat of misery and terror upon his face. "I know I won't get out of here alive."

The cowboy drew a deep breath, as if his mind was passing into the last stages of dissolution. "Well, I'm doggoned," he whispered to himself.

Scully wheeled suddenly and faced his son. "You've been troublin' this man!"

Johnnie's voice was loud with its burden of grievance. "Why, good Gawd, I ain't done nothin' to 'im."

The Swede broke in. "Gentlemen, do not disturb yourselves. I will leave this house. I will go away, because"—he accused them dramatically with his glance—"because I do not want to be killed."

Scully was furious with his son. "Will you tell me what is the matter, you young divil? What's the matter, anyhow? Speak out!"

"Blame it!" cried Johnnie in despair, "don't I tell you I don't know? He—he says we want to kill him, and that's all I know. I can't tell what ails him."

The Swede continued to repeat: "Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will leave this house. I will go away, because I do not wish to be killed. Yes, of course, I am crazy—yes. But I know one thing! I will go away. I will leave this house. Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will go away."

"You will not go 'way," said Scully. "You will not go 'way until I hear the reason of this business. If anybody has troubled you I will take care of him. This is my house. You are under my roof, and I will not allow any peaceable man to be troubled here." He cast a terrible eye upon Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner.

"Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will go away. I do not wish to be killed." The Swede moved toward the door which opened upon the stairs. It was evidently his intention to go at once for his baggage.

"No, no," shouted Scully peremptorily; but the white-faced man slid by him and disappeared. "Now," said Scully severely, "what does this mane?"

Johnnie and the cowboy cried together: "Why, we didn't do nothin' to 'im!"

Sully's eyes were cold. "No," he said, "you didn't?"

Johnnie swore a deep oath. "Why, this is the wildest loon I ever see. We didn't do nothin' at all. We were jest sittin' here playin' cards, and he—"

The father suddenly spoke to the Easterner. "Mr. Blanc," he asked, "what has these boys been doin'?"

The Easterner reflected again. "I didn't see anything wrong at

all," he said at last, slowly.

Scully began to howl. "But what does it mane?" He stared ferociously at his son. "I have a mind to lather you for this, my boy."

Johnnie was frantic. "Well, what have I done?" he bawled at his father.

### III

"I think you are tongue-tied," said Scully finally to his son, the cowboy, and the Easterner; and at the end of this scornful sentence he left the room.

Upstairs the Swede was swiftly fastening the straps of his great valise. Once his back happened to be half turned toward the door, and, hearing a noise there, he wheeled and sprang up, uttering a loud cry. Scully's wrinkled visage showed grimly in the light of the small lamp he carried. This yellow effulgence, streaming upward, colored only his prominent features, and left his eyes, for instance, in mysterious shadow. He resembled a murderer.

"Man! man!" he exclaimed, "have you gone daffy?"

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" rejoined the other. "There are people in this world who know pretty nearly as much as you do—understand?"

For a moment they stood gazing at each other. Upon the Swede's deathly pale cheeks were two spots brightly crimson and sharply edged, as if they had been carefully painted. Scully placed the light on the table and sat himself on the edge of the bed. He spoke ruminatively. "By cracky, I never heard of such a thing in my life. It's a complete muddle. I can't, for the soul of me, think how you ever got this idea into your head." Presently he lifted his eyes and asked: "And did you sure think they were going to kill you?"

The Swede scanned the old man as if he wished to see into his mind. "I did," he said at last. He obviously suspected that this answer might precipitate an outbreak. As he pulled on a strap his whole arm shook, the elbow wavering like a bit of paper.

Scully banged his hand impressively on the footboard of the bed. "Why, man, we're goin' to have a line of ilictric street-cars in this town next spring."

"'A line of electric street-cars,'" repeated the Swede, stupidly.

"And," said Scully, "there's a new railroad goin' to be built down from Broken Arm to here. Not to mintion the four churches and the smashin' big brick schoolhouse. Then there's the big factory, too. Why, in two years Romper'll be a met-tro-pol-is."

Having finished the preparation of his baggage, the Swede straightened himself. "Mr. Scully," he said, with sudden hardihood, "how much do I owe you?"

"You don't owe me anythin'," said the old man, angrily.

"Yes, I do," retorted the Swede. He took seventy-five cents from his pocket and tendered it to Scully; but the latter snapped his fingers in disdainful refusal. However, it happened that they both



stood gazing in a strange fashion at three silver pieces on the Swede's open palm.

"I'll not take your money," said Scully at last. "Not after what's been goin' on here." Then a plan seemed to strike him. "Here," he cried, picking up his lamp and moving toward the door. "Here! Come with me a minute."

"No," said the Swede, in overwhelming alarm.

"Yes," urged the old man. "Come on! I want you to come and see a picter—just across the hall—in my room."

The Swede must have concluded that his hour was come. His jaw dropped and his teeth showed like a dead man's. He ultimately followed Scully across the corridor, but he had the step of one hung in chains.

Scully flashed the light high on the wall of his own chamber. There was revealed a ridiculous photograph of a little girl. She was leaning against a balustrade of gorgeous decoration, and the formidable bang to her hair was prominent. The figure was as graceful as an upright sled-stake, and, withal, it was of the hue of lead. "There," said Scully, tenderly, "that's the picter of my little girl that died. Her name was Carrie. She had the purtiest hair you ever saw! I was that fond of her, she—"

Turning then, he saw that the Swede was not contemplating the picture at all, but, instead, was keeping keen watch on the gloom in the rear.

"Look, man!" cried Scully, heartily. "That's the picter of my little gal that died. Her name was Carrie. And then here's the picter of my oldest boy. Michael. He's a lawyer in Lincoln, an' doin' well. I gave that boy a grand eddication, and I'm glad for it now. He's a fine boy. Look at 'im now. Ain't he bold as blazes, him there in Lincoln, an honored an' respected gentleman! An honored and respected gentleman," concluded Scully with a flourish. And, so saying, he smote the Swede jovially on the back.

The Swede faintly smiled.

"Now," said the old man, "there's only one more thing." He dropped suddenly to the floor and thrust his head beneath the bed. The Swede could hear his muffled voice. "I'd keep it under me piller if it wasn't for that boy Johnnie. Then there's the old woman— Where is it now? I never put it twice in the same place. Ah, now come out with you!"

Presently he backed clumsily from under the bed, dragging with him an old coat rolled into a bundle. "I've fetched him," he muttered. Kneeling on the floor, he unrolled the coat and extracted from its heart a large yellow-brown whiskey-bottle.

His first manœuvre was to hold the bottle up to the light. Re-assured, apparently, that nobody had been tampering with it, he thrust it with a generous movement toward the Swede.

The weak-kneed Swede was about to eagerly clutch this element of strength, but he suddenly jerked his hand away and cast a look of horror upon Scully.

"Drink," said the old man affectionately. He had risen to his feet, and now stood facing the Swede.

There was a silence. Then again Scully said: "Drink!"

The Swede laughed wildly. He grabbed the bottle, put it to his mouth; and as his lips curled absurdly around the opening and his throat worked, he kept his glance, burning with hatred, upon the old man's face.

#### IV

After the departure of Scully the three men, with the card-board still upon their knecs, preserved for a long time an astounded silence. Then Johnnie said: "That's the doddangedest Swede I ever sec."

"He ain't no Swede," said the cowboy, scornfully.

"Well, what is he then?" cried Johnnie. "What is he then?"

"It's my opinion," replied the cowboy deliberately, "he's some kind of a Dutchman." It was a venerable custom of the country to entitle as Swedes all light-haired men who spoke with a heavy tongue. In consequence the idea of the cowboy was not without its daring. "Yes, sir," he repeated. "It's my opinion this feller is some kind of a Dutchman."

"Well, he says he's a Swede, anyhow," muttered Johnnie, sulkily. He turned to the Easterner: "What do you think, Mr. Blanc?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied the Easterner.

"Well, what do you think makes him act that way?" asked the cowboy.

"Why, he's frightened." The Easterner knocked his pipe against a rim of the stove. "He's clear frightened out of his boots."

"What at?" cried Johnnie and the cowboy together.

The Easterner reflected over his answer.

"What at?" cried the others again.

"Oh, I don't know, but it seems to me this man has been reading dime novels, and he thinks he's right out in the middle of it—the shootin' and stabbin' and all."

"But," said the cowboy, deeply scandalized, "this ain't Wyoming, ner none of them places. This is Nebrasker."

"Yes," added Johnnie, "an' why don't he wait till he gits out West?"

The travelled Easterner laughed. "It isn't different there even—not in these days. But he thinks he's right in the middle of hell."

Johnnie and the cowboy mused long.

"It's awful funny," remarked Johnnie at last.

"Yes," said the cowboy. "This is a queer game. I hope we don't git snowed in, because then we'd have to stand this here man bein' around with us all the time. That wouldn't be no good."

"I wish pop would throw him out," said Johnnie.

Presently they heard a loud stamping on the stairs, accompanied by ringing jokes in the voice of old Scully, and laughter, evidently from the Swede. The men around the stove stared vacantly at each other. "Gosh!" said the cowboy. The door flew open, and old Scully, flushed and anecdotal, came into the room. He was jabbering at the Swede, who followed him, laughing bravely. It was the entry of two roisterers from a banquet hall.

"Come now," said Scully sharply to the three seated men, "move up and give us a chance at the stove." The cowboy and the Easterner obediently sidled their chairs to make room for the newcomers. Johnnie, however, simply arranged himself in a more indolent attitude, and then remained motionless.

"Come! Git over, there," said Scully.

"Plenty of room on the other side of the stove," said Johnnie.

"Do you think we want to sit in the draught?" roared the father.

But the Swede here interposed with a grandeur of confidence. "No, no. Let the boy sit where he likes," he cried in a bullying voice to the father.

"All right! All right!" said Scully, deferentially. The cowboy and the Easterner exchanged glances of wonder.

The five chairs were formed in a crescent about one side of the stove. The Swede began to talk; he talked arrogantly, profanely, angrily. Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner maintained a morose silence, while old Scully appeared to be receptive and eager, breaking in constantly with sympathetic ejaculations.

Finally the Swede announced that he was thirsty. He moved in his chair, and said that he would go for a drink of water.

"I'll git it for you," cried Scully at once.

"No," said the Swede, contemptuously. "I'll get it for myself." He arose and stalked with the air of an owner off into the executive parts of the hotel.

As soon as the Swede was out of hearing Scully sprang to his feet and whispered intensely to the others: "Up-stairs he thought I was tryin' to poison 'im."

"Say," said Johnnie, "this makes me sick. Why don't you throw 'im out in the snow?"

"Why, he's all right now," declared Scully. "It was only that he was from the East, and he thought this was a tough place. That's all. He's all right now."

The cowboy looked with admiration upon the Easterner. "You were straight," he said. "You were on to that there Dutchman."

"Well," said Johnnie to his father, "he may be all right now, but I don't see it. Other time he was scared, but now he's too fresh."

Scully's speech was always a combination of Irish brogue and idiom, Western twang and idiom, and scraps of curiously formal

diction taken from the story-books and newspapers. He now hurled a strange mass of language at the head of his son. "What do I keep? What do I keep? What do I keep?" he demanded, in a voice of thunder. He slapped his knee impressively, to indicate that he himself was going to make reply, and that all should heed. "I keep a hotel," he shouted. "A hotel, do you mind? A guest under my roof has sacred privileges. He is to be intimidated by none. Not one word shall he hear that would prejudice him in favor of goin' away. I'll not have it. There's no place in this here town where they can say they iver took in a guest of mine because he was afraid to stay here." He wheeled suddenly upon the cowboy and the Easterner. "Am I right?"

"Yes, Mr. Scully," said the cowboy, "I think you're right."

"Yes, Mr. Scully," said the Easterner, "I think you're right."

# V

At six-o'clock supper, the Swede fizzed like a fire-wheel. He sometimes seemed on the point of bursting into riotous song, and in all his madness he was encouraged by old Scully. The Easterner was encased in reserve; the cowboy sat in wide-mouthed amazement, forgetting to eat, while Johnnie wrathily demolished great plates of food. The daughters of the house, when they were obliged to replenish the biscuits, approached as warily as Indians, and, having succeeded in their purpose, fled with ill-concealed trepidation. The Swede domineered the whole feast, and he gave it the appearance of a cruel bacchanal. He seemed to have grown suddenly taller, he gazed, brutally disdainful, into every face. His voice rang through the room. Once when he jabbed out harpoon-fashion with his fork to pinion a biscuit, the weapon nearly impaled the hand of the Easterner, which had been stretched quietly out for the same biscuit.

After supper, as the men filed toward the other room, the Swede smote Scully ruthlessly on the shoulder. "Well, old boy, that was a good, square meal." Johnnie looked hopefully at his father; he knew that shoulder was tender from an old fall; and, indeed, it appeared for a moment as if Scully was going to flame out over the matter, but in the end he smiled a sickly smile and remained silent. The others understood from his manner that he was admitting his responsibility for the Swede's new view-point.

Johnnie, however, addressed his parent in an aside. "Why don't you license somebody to kick you downstairs?" Scully scowled darkly by way of reply.

When they were gathered about the stove, the Swede insisted on another game of High-Five. Scully gently deprecated the plan at first, but the Swede turned a wolfish glare upon him. The old man subsided, and the Swede canvassed the others. In his tone there was always a great threat. The cowboy and the Easterner both re-

marked indifferently that they would play. Scully said that he would presently have to go to meet the 6.58 train, and so the Swede turned menacingly upon Johnnie. For a moment their glances crossed like blades, and then Johnnie smiled and said, "Yes, I'll play."

They formed a square, with the little board on their knees. The Easterner and the Swede were again partners. As the play went on, it was noticeable that the cowboy was not board-whacking as usual. Meanwhile, Scully, near the lamp, had put on his spectacles and, with an appearance curiously like an old priest, was reading a newspaper. In time he went out to meet the 6.58 train, and, despite his precautions, a gust of polar wind whirled into the room as he opened the door. Besides scattering the cards, it chilled the players to the marrow. The Swede cursed frightfully. When Scully returned, his entrance disturbed a cosy and friendly scene. The Swede again cursed. But presently they were once more intent, their heads bent forward and their hands moving swiftly. The Swede had adopted the fashion of board-whacking.

Scully took up his paper and for a long time remained immersed in matters which were extraordinarily remote from him. The lamp burned badly, and once he stopped to adjust the wick. The newspaper, as he turned from page to page, rustled with a slow and comfortable sound. Then suddenly he heard three terrible words: "You are cheatin'!"

Such scenes often prove that there can be little of dramatic import in environment. Any room can present a tragic front; any room can be comic. This little den was now hideous as a torture-chamber. The new faces of the men themselves had changed it upon the instant. The Swede held a huge fist in front of Johnnie's face, while the latter looked steadily over it into the blazing orbs of his accuser. The Easterner had grown pallid; the cowboy's jaw had dropped in that expression of bovine amazement which was one of his important mannerisms. After the three words, the first sound in the room was made by Scully's paper as it floated forgotten to his feet. His spectacles had also fallen from his nose, but by a clutch he had saved them in air. His hand, grasping the spectacles, now remained poised awkwardly and near his shoulder. He stared at the card-players.

Probably the silence was while a second elapsed. Then, if the floor had been suddenly twitched out from under the men they could not have moved quicker. The five had projected themselves headlong toward a common point. It happened that Johnnie, in rising to hurl himself upon the Swede, had stumbled slightly because of his curiously instinctive care for the cards and the board. The loss of the moment allowed time for the arrival of Scully, and also allowed the cowboy time to give the Swede a great push which

sent him staggering back. The men found tongue together, and hoarse shouts of rage, appeal, or fear burst from every throat. The cowboy pushed and jostled feverishly at the Swede, and the Easterner and Scully clung wildly to Johnnie; but through the smoky air, above the swaying bodies of the peace-compellers, the eyes of the two warriors ever sought each other in glances of challenge that were at once hot and steely.

Of course the board had been overturned, and now the whole company of cards was scattered over the floor, where the boots of the men trampled the fat and painted kings and queens as they gazed with their silly eyes at the war that was waging above them.

Scully's voice was dominating the yells. "Stop now! Stop, I say! Stop, now—"

Johnnie, as he struggled to burst through the rank formed by Scully and the Easterner, was crying, "Well, he says I cheated! He says I cheated! I won't allow no man to say I cheated! If he says I cheated, he's a —— —!"

The cowboy was telling the Swede, "Quit, now! Quit, d'yc hear—"

The screams of the Swede never ceased: "He did cheat! I saw him! I saw him—"

As for the Easterner, he was importuning in a voice that was not heeded: "Wait a moment, can't you? Oh, wait a moment. What's the good of a fight over a game of cards? Wait a moment—"

In this tumult no complete sentences were clear. "Cheat"—"Quit"—"He says"—these fragments pierced the uproar and rang out sharply. It was remarkable that, whereas Scully undoubtedly made the most noise, he was the least heard of any of the riotous band.

Then suddenly there was a great cessation. It was as if each man had paused for breath; and although the room was still lighted with the anger of men, it could be seen that there was no danger of immediate conflict, and at once Johnnie, shouldering his way forward, almost succeeded in confronting the Swede. "What did you say I cheated for? What did you say I cheated for? I don't cheat, and I won't let no man say I do!"

The Swede said, "I saw you! I saw you!"

"Well," cried Johnnie, "I'll fight any man what says I cheat!"

"No, you won't," said the cowboy. "Not here."

"Ah, be still, can't you?" said Scully, coming between them.

The quiet was sufficient to allow the Easterner's voice to be heard. He was repeating, "Oh, wait a moment, can't you? What's the good of a fight over a game of cards? Wait a moment!"

Johnnie, his red face appearing above his father's shoulder, hailed the Swede again. "Did you say I cheated?"

The Swede showed his teeth. "Yes."

"Then," said Johnnie, "we must fight."

"Yes, fight," roared the Swede. He was like a demoniac. "Yes, fight! I'll show you what kind of a man I am! I'll show you who you want to fight! Maybe you think I can't fight! Maybe you think I can't! I'll show you, you skin, you card-sharp! Yes, you cheated! You cheated! You cheated!"

"Well, let's go at it, then, mister," said Johnnie, coolly.

The cowboy's brow was beaded with sweat from his efforts in intercepting all sorts of raids. He turned in despair to Scully. "What are you goin' to do now?"

A change had come over the Celtic visage of the old man. He now seemed all eagerness; his eyes glowed.

"We'll let them fight," he answered, stalwartly. "I can't put up with it any longer. I've stood this damned Swede till I'm sick. We'll let them fight."

## VI

The men prepared to go out-of-doors. The Easterner was so nervous that he had great difficulty in getting his arms into the sleeves of his new leather coat. As the cowboy drew his fur cap down over his ears his hands trembled. In fact, Johnnie and old Scully were the only ones who displayed no agitation. These preliminaries were conducted without words.

Scully threw open the door. "Well, come on," he said. Instantly a terrific wind caused the flame of the lamp to struggle at its wick, while a puff of black smoke sprang from the chimney-top. The stove was in mid-current of the blast, and its voice swelled to equal the roar of the storm. Some of the scarred and bedabbled cards were caught up from the floor and dashed helplessly against the farther wall. The men lowered their heads and plunged into the tempest as into a sea.

No snow was falling, but great whirls and clouds of flakes, swept up from the ground by the frantic winds, were streaming southward with the speed of bullets. The covered land was blue with the sheen of an unearthly satin, and there was no other hue save where, at the low, black railway station—which seemed incredibly distant—one light gleamed like a tiny jewel. As the men floundered into a thigh-deep drift, it was known that the Swede was bawling out something. Scully went to him, put a hand on his shoulder, and projected an ear. "What's that you say?" he shouted.

"I say," bawled the Swede again, "I won't stand much show against this gang. I know you'll all pitch on me."

Scully smote him reproachfully on the arm. "Tut, man!" he yelled. The wind tore the words from Scully's lips and scattered them far alee.

"You are all a gang of—" boomed the Swede, but the storm also seized the remainder of this sentence.

Immediately turning their backs upon the wind, the men had swung around a corner to the sheltered side of the hotel. It was the function of the little house to preserve here, amid this great devastation of snow, an irregular V-shape of heavily encrusted grass, which crackled beneath the feet. One could imagine the great drifts piled against the windward side. When the party reached the comparative peace of this spot it was found that the Swede was still bellowing.

"Oh, I know what kind of a thing this is! I know you'll all pitch on me. I can't lick you all!"

Scully turned upon him panther-fashion. "You'll not have to whip all of us. You'll have to whip my son Johnnie. An' the man what troubles you durin' that time will have me to dale with."

The arrangements were swiftly made. The two men faced each other, obedient to the harsh commands of Scully, whose face, in the subtly luminous gloom, could be seen set in the austere impersonal lines that are pictured on the countenances of the Roman veterans. The Easterner's teeth were chattering, and he was hopping up and down like a mechanical toy. The cowboy stood rock-like.

The contestants had not stripped off any clothing. Each was in his ordinary attire. Their fists were up, and they eyed each other in a calm that had the elements of leonine cruelty in it.

During this pause, the Easterner's mind, like a film, took lasting impressions of three men—the iron-nerved master of the ceremony; the Swede, pale, motionless, terrible; and Johnnie, serene yet ferocious, brutish yet heroic. The entire prelude had in it a tragedy greater than the tragedy of action, and this aspect was accentuated by the long, mellow cry of the blizzard, as it sped the tumbling and wailing flakes into the black abyss of the south.

"Now!" said Scully.

The two combatants leaped forward and crashed together like bullocks. There was heard the cushioned sound of blows, and of a curse squeezing out from between the tight teeth of one.

As for the spectators, the Easterner's pent-up breath exploded from him with a pop of relief, absolute relief from the tension of the preliminaries. The cowboy bounded into the air with a yowl. Scully was immovable as from supreme amazement and fear at the fury of the fight which he himself had permitted and arranged.

For a time the encounter in the darkness was such a perplexity of flying arms that it presented no more detail than would a swiftly revolving wheel. Occasionally a face, as if illumined by a flash of light, would shine out, ghastly and marked with pink spots. A moment later, the men might have been known as shadows, if it were not for the involuntary utterance of oaths that came from them in



whispers.

Suddenly a holocaust of warlike desire caught the cowboy, and he bolted forward with the speed of a broncho. "Go it, Johnnie! go it! Kill him! Kill him!"

Scully confronted him. "Kape back," he said; and by his glance the cowboy could tell that this man was Johnnie's father.

To the Easterner there was a monotony of unchangeable fighting that was an abomination. This confused mingling was eternal to his sense, which was concentrated in a longing for the end, the priceless end. Once the fighters lurched near him, and as he scrambled hastily backward he heard them breathe like men on the rack.

"Kill him, Johnnie! Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!" The cowboy's face was contorted like one of those agony masks in museums.

"Keep still," said Scully, icily.

Then there was a sudden loud grunt, incomplete, cut short, and Johnnie's body swung away from the Swede and fell with sickening heaviness to the grass. The cowboy was barely in time to prevent the mad Swede from flinging himself upon his prone adversary. "No, you don't," said the cowboy, interposing an arm. "Wait a second."

Scully was at his son's side. "Johnnie! Johnnie, me boy!" His voice had a quality of melancholy tenderness. "Johnnie! Can you go on with it?" He looked anxiously down into the bloody, pulpy face of his son.

There was a moment of silence, and then Johnnie answered in his ordinary voice, "Yes, I—it—yes."

Assisted by his father he struggled to his feet. "Wait a bit now till you git your wind," said the old man.

A few paces away the cowboy was lecturing the Swede. "No, you don't! Wait a second!"

The Easterner was plucking at Scully's sleeve. "Oh, this is enough," he pleaded. "This is enough! Let it go as it stands. This is enough!"

"Bill," said Scully, "git out of the road." The cowboy stepped aside. "Now." The combatants were actuated by a new caution as they advanced toward collision. They glared at each other, and then the Swede aimed a lightning blow that carried with it his entire weight. Johnnie was evidently half stupid from weakness, but he miraculously dodged, and his fist sent the over-balanced Swede sprawling.

The cowboy, Scully, and the Easterner burst into a cheer that was like a chorus of triumphant soldiery, but before its conclusion the Swede had scuffled agilely to his feet and come in berserk abandon at his foe. There was another perplexity of flying arms, and

Johnnie's body again swung away and fell, even as a bundle might fall from a roof. The Swede instantly staggered to a little wind-waved tree and leaned upon it, breathing like an engine, while his savage and flame-lit eyes roamed from face to face as the men bent over Johnnie. There was a splendor of isolation in his situation at this time which the Easterner felt once when, lifting his eyes from the man on the ground, he beheld that mysterious and lonely figure, waiting.

"Are you any good yet, Johnnie?" asked Scully in a broken voice.

The son gasped and opened his eyes languidly. After a moment he answered, "No—I ain't—any good—any—more." Then, from shame and bodily ill, he began to weep, the tears furrowing down through the blood-stains on his face. "He was too—too—too heavy for me."

Scully straightened and addressed the waiting figure. "Stranger," he said, evenly, "it's all up with our side." Then his voice changed into that vibrant huskiness which is commonly the tone of the most simple and deadly announcements. "Johnnie is whipped."

Without reply, the victor moved off on the route to the front door of the hotel.

The cowboy was formulating new and unspellable blasphemies. The Easterner was startled to find that they were out in a wind that seemed to come direct from the shadowed arctic floes. He heard again the wail of the snow as it was flung to its grave in the south. He knew now that all this time the cold had been sinking into him deeper and deeper, and he wondered that he had not perished. He felt indifferent to the condition of the vanquished man.

"Johnnie, can you walk?" asked Scully.

"Did I hurt—hurt him any?" asked the son.

"Can you walk, boy? Can you walk?"

Johnnie's voice was suddenly strong. There was a robust impatience in it. "I asked you whether I hurt him any!"

"Yes, yes, Johnnie," answered the cowboy, consolingly; "he's hurt a good deal."

They raised him from the ground, and as soon as he was on his feet he went tottering off, rebuffing all attempts at assistance. When the party rounded the corner they were fairly blinded by the pelting of the snow. It burned their faces like fire. The cowboy carried Johnnie through the drift to the door. As they entered, some cards again rose from the floor and beat against the wall.

The Easterner rushed to the stove. He was so profoundly chilled that he almost dared to embrace the glowing iron. The Swede was not in the room. Johnnie sank into a chair and, folding his arms on his knees, buried his face in them. Scully, warming one foot and

then the other at a rim of the stove, muttered to himself with Celtic mournfulness. The cowboy had removed his fur cap, and with a dazed and rueful air he was running one hand through his tousled locks. From overhead they could hear the creaking of boards, as the Swede tramped here and there in his room.

The sad quiet was broken by the sudden flinging open of a door that led toward the kitchen. It was instantly followed by an inrush of women. They precipitated themselves upon Johnnie amid a chorus of lamentation. Before they carried their prey off to the kitchen, there to be bathed and harangued with that mixture of sympathy and abuse which is a feat of their sex, the mother straightened herself and fixed old Scully with an eye of stern reproach. "Shame be upon you, Patrick Scully!" she cried. "Your own son, too. Shame be upon you!"

"There, now! Be quiet, now!" said the old man, weakly.

"Shame be upon you, Patrick Scully!" The girls, rallying to this slogan, sniffed disdainfully in the direction of those trembling accomplices, the cowboy and the Easterner. Presently they bore Johnnie away, and left the three men to dismal reflection.

## VII

"I'd like to fight this here Dutchman myself," said the cowboy, breaking a long silence.

Scully wagged his head sadly. "No, that wouldn't do. It wouldn't be right. It wouldn't be right."

"Well, why wouldn't it?" argued the cowboy. "I don't see no harm in it."

"No," answered Scully, with mournful heroism. "It wouldn't be right. It was Johnnie's fight, and now we mustn't whip the man just because he whipped Johnnie."

"Yes, that's true enough," said the cowboy; "but—he better not get fresh with me, because I couldn't stand no more of it."

"You'll not say a word to him," commanded Scully, and even then they heard the tread of the Swede on the stairs. His entrance was made theatric. He swept the door back with a bang and swaggered to the middle of the room. No one looked at him. "Well," he cried, insolently, at Scully, "I s'pose you'll tell me now how much I owe you?"

The old man remained stolid. "You don't owe me nothin'."

"Huh!" said the Swede, "huh! Don't owe 'im nothin'."

The cowboy addressed the Swede. "Stranger, I don't see how you come to be so gay around here."

Old Scully was instantly alert. "Stop!" he shouted, holding his hand forth, fingers upward. "Bill, you shut up!"

The cowboy spat carelessly into the sawdust-box. "I didn't say a word, did I?" he asked.

"Mr. Scully," called the Swede, "how much do I owe you?" It was seen that he was attired for departure, and that he had his valise in his hand.

"You don't owe me nothin'," repeated Scully in the same imperturbable way.

"Huh!" said the Swede. "I guess you're right. I guess if it was any way at all, you'd owe me somethin'. That's what I guess." He turned to the cowboy. "'Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!'" he mimicked, and then guffawed victoriously. "'Kill him!'" He was convulsed with ironical humor.

But he might have been jeering the dead. The three men were immovable and silent, staring with glassy eyes at the stove.

The Swede opened the door and passed into the storm, giving one derisive glance backward at the still group.

As soon as the door was closed, Scully and the cowboy leaped to their feet and began to curse. They trampled to and fro, waving their arms and smashing into the air with their fists. "Oh, but that was a hard minute!" wailed Scully. "That was a hard minute! Him there leerin' and scoffin'! One bang at his nose was worth forty dollars to me that minute! How did you stand it, Bill?"

"How did I stand it?" cried the cowboy in a quivering voice. "How did I stand it? Oh!"

The old man burst into sudden brogue. "I'd loike to take that Swade," he wailed, "and hould 'im down on a shtone flure and bate 'im to a jelly wid a shtick!"

The cowboy groaned in sympathy. "I'd like to git him by the neck and ha-ammer him"—he brought his hand down on a chair with a noise like a pistol-shot—"hammer that there Dutchman until he couldn't tell himself from a dead coyote!"

"I'd bate 'im until he—"

"I'd show *him* some things—"

And then together they raised a yearning, fanatic cry—"Oh-o-oh! if we only could—"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"And then I'd—"

"O-o-oh!"

## VIII

The Swede, tightly gripping his valise, tacked across the face of the storm as if he carried sails. He was following a line of little naked, gasping trees which, he knew, must mark the way of the road. His face, fresh from the pounding of Johnnie's fists, felt more pleasure than pain in the wind and the driving snow. A number of square shapes loomed upon him finally, and he knew them as the houses of the main body of the town. He found a street and made

travel along it, leaning heavily upon the wind whenever, at a corner, a terrific blast caught him.

He might have been in a deserted village. We picture the world as thick with conquering and elate humanity, but here, with the bugles of the tempest pealing, it was hard to imagine a peopled earth. One viewed the existence of man then as a marvel, and conceded a glamor of wonder to these lice which were caused to cling to a whirling, fire-smitten, ice-locked, disease-stricken, space-lost bulb. The conceit of man was explained by this storm to be the very engine of life. One was a coxcomb not to die in it. However, the Swede found a saloon.

In front of it an indomitable red light was burning, and the snowflakes were made blood-color as they flew through the circumscribed territory of the lamp's shining. The Swede pushed open the door of the saloon and entered. A sanded expanse was before him, and at the end of it four men sat about a table drinking. Down one side of the room extended a radiant bar, and its guardian was leaning upon his elbows listening to the talk of the men at the table. The Swede dropped his valise upon the floor and, smiling fraternally upon the barkeeper, said, "Gimme some whiskey, will you?" The man placed a bottle, a whiskey-glass, and a glass of ice-thick water upon the bar. The Swede poured himself an abnormal portion of whiskey and drank it in three gulps. "Pretty bad night," remarked the bartender, indifferently. He was making the pretension of blindness which is usually a distinction of his class; but it could have been seen that he was furtively studying the half-crazed blood-stains on the face of the Swede. "Bad night," he said again.

"Oh, it's good enough for me," replied the Swede, hardily, as he poured himself some more whiskey. The barkeeper took his coin and manœuvred it through its reception by the high nickelled cash-machine. A bell rang; a card labelled "20 cts." had appeared.

"No," continued the Swede, "this isn't too bad weather. It's good enough for me."

"So?" murmured the barkeeper, languidly.

The copious drams made the Swede's eyes swim, and he breathed a trifle heavier. "Yes, I like this weather. I like it. It suits me." It was apparently his design to impart a deep significance to these words.

"So?" murmured the bartender again. He turned to gaze dreamily at the scroll-like birds and bird-like scrolls which had been drawn with soap upon the mirrors in back of the bar.

"Well, I guess I'll take another drink," said the Swede, presently. "Have something?"

"No, thanks; I'm not drinkin'," answered the bartender. Afterward he asked, "How did you hurt your face?"

The Swede immediately began to boast loudly. "Why, in a fight. I thumped the soul out of a man down here at Scully's hotel."

The interest of the four men at the table was at last aroused.

"Who was it?" said one.

"Johnnie Scully," blustered the Swede. "Son of the man what runs it. He will be pretty near dead for some weeks, I can tell you. I made a nice thing of him, I did. He couldn't get up. They carried him in the house. Have a drink?"

Instantly the men in some subtle way encased themselves in reserve. "No, thanks," said one. The group was of curious formation. Two were prominent local business men; one was the district attorney; and one was a professional gambler of the kind known as "square." But a scrutiny of the group would not have enabled an observer to pick the gambler from the men of more reputable pursuits. He was, in fact, a man so delicate in manner, when among people of fair class, and so judicious in his choice of victims, that in the strictly masculine part of the town's life he had come to be explicitly trusted and admired. People called him a thoroughbred. The fear and contempt with which his craft was regarded were undoubtedly the reason why his quiet dignity shone conspicuous above the quiet dignity of men who might be merely hatters, billiard-markers, or grocery-clerks. Beyond an occasional unwary traveller who came by rail, this gambler was supposed to prey solely upon reckless and senile farmers, who, when flush with good crops, drove into town in all the pride and confidence of an absolutely invulnerable stupidity. Hearing at times in circuitous fashion of the despoilment of such a farmer, the important men of Romper invariably laughed in contempt of the victim, and if they thought of the wolf at all, it was with a kind of pride at the knowledge that he would never dare think of attacking their wisdom and courage. Besides, it was popular that this gambler had a real wife and two real children in a neat cottage in a suburb, where he led an exemplary home life; and when any one even suggested a discrepancy in his character, the crowd immediately vociferated descriptions of this virtuous family circle. Then men who led exemplary home lives, and men who did not lead exemplary home lives, all subsided in a bunch, remarking that there was nothing more to be said.

However, when a restriction was placed upon him—as, for instance, when a strong clique of members of the new Pollywog Club refused to permit him, even as a spectator, to appear in the rooms of the organization—the candor and gentleness with which he accepted the judgment disarmed many of his foes and made his friends more desperately partisan. He invariably distinguished between himself and a respectable Romper man so quickly and frankly that his manner actually appeared to be a continual broad-

cast compliment.

And one must not forget to declare the fundamental fact of his entire position in Romper. It is irrefutable that in all affairs outside his business, in all matters that occur eternally and commonly between man and man, this thieving card-player was so generous, so just, so moral, that, in a contest, he could have put to flight the consciences of nine tenths of the citizens of Romper.

And so it happened that he was seated in this saloon with the two prominent local merchants and the district attorney.

The Swede continued to drink raw whiskey, meanwhile babbling at the barkeeper and trying to induce him to indulge in potations. "Come on. Have a drink. Come on. What—no? Well, have a little one, then. By gawd, I've whipped a man to-night, and I want to celebrate. I whipped him good, too. Gentlemen," the Swede cried to the men at the table, "have a drink?"

"Ssh!" said the barkeeper.

The group at the table, although furtively attentive, had been pretending to be deep in talk, but now a man lifted his eyes toward the Swede and said, shortly, "Thanks. We don't want any more."

At this reply the Swede ruffled out his chest like a rooster. "Well," he exploded, "it seems I can't get anybody to drink with me in this town. Seems so, don't it? Well!"

"Ssh!" said the barkeeper.

"Say," snarled the Swede, "don't you try to shut me up. I won't have it. I'm a gentleman, and I want people to drink with me. And I want 'em to drink with me now. Now—do you understand?" He rapped the bar with his knuckles.

Years of experience had calloused the bartender. He merely grew sulky. "I hear you," he answered.

"Well," cried the Swede, "listen hard then. See those men over there? Well, they're going to drink with me, and don't you forget it. Now you watch."

"Hi!" yelled the barkeeper, "this won't do!"

"Why won't it?" demanded the Swede. He stalked over to the table, and by chance laid his hand upon the shoulder of the gambler. "How about this?" he asked wrathfully. "I asked you to drink with me."

The gambler simply twisted his head and spoke over his shoulder. "My friend, I don't know you."

"Oh, hell!" answered the Swede, "come and have a drink."

"Now, my boy," advised the gambler, kindly, "take your hand off my shoulder and go 'way and mind your own business." He was a little, slim man, and it seemed strange to hear him use this tone of heroic patronage to the burly Swede. The other men at the table said nothing.

"What! You won't drink with me, you little dude? I'll make you, then! I'll make you!" The Swede had grasped the gambler frenziedly at the throat, and was dragging him from his chair. The other men sprang up. The barkeeper dashed around the corner of his bar. There was a great tumult, and then was seen a long blade in the hand of the gambler. It shot forward, and a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon. The Swede fell with a cry of supreme astonishment.

The prominent merchants and the district attorney must have at once tumbled out of the place backward. The bartender found himself hanging limply to the arm of a chair and gazing into the eyes of a murderer.

"Henry," said the latter, as he wiped his knife on one of the towels that hung beneath the bar rail, "you tell 'em where to find me. I'll be home, waiting for 'em." Then he vanished. A moment afterward the barkeeper was in the street dinning through the storm for help and, moreover, companionship.

The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop of the cash-machine: "This registers the amount of your purchase."

## IX

Months later, the cowboy was frying pork over the stove of a little ranch near the Dakota line, when there was a quick thud of hoofs outside, and presently the Easterner entered with the letters and the papers.

"Well," said the Easterner at once, "the chap that killed the Swede has got three years. Wasn't much, was it?"

"He has? Three years?" The cowboy poised his pan of pork, while he ruminated upon the news. "Three years. That ain't much."

"No. It was a light sentence," replied the Easterner as he unbuckled his spurs. "Seems there was a good deal of sympathy for him in Romper."

"If the bartender had been any good," observed the cowboy, thoughtfully, "he would have gone in and cracked that there Dutchman on the head with a bottle in the beginnin' of it and stopped all this here murderin'."

"Yes, a thousand things might have happened," said the Easterner, tartly.

The cowboy returned his pan of pork to the fire, but his philosophy continued. "It's funny, ain't it? If he hadn't said Johnnie was cheatin' he'd be alive this minute. He was an awful fool. Game played for fun, too. Not for money. I believe he was crazy."

"I feel sorry for that gambler," said the Easterner.

"Oh, so do I," said the cowboy. "He don't deserve none of it for



killin' who he did."

"The Swede might not have been killed if everything had been square."

"Might not have been killed?" exclaimed the cowboy. "Everythin' square? Why, when he said that Johnnie was cheatin' and acted like such a jackass? And then in the saloon he fairly walked up to git hurt?" With these arguments the cowboy browbeat the Easterner and reduced him to rage.

"You're a fool!" cried the Easterner, viciously. "You're a bigger jackass than the Swede by a million majority. Now let me tell you one thing. Let me tell you something. Listen! Johnnie *was* cheating!"

"'Johnnie,'" said the cowboy, blankly. There was a minute of silence, and then he said, robustly, "Why, no. The game was only for fun."

"Fun or not," said the Easterner, "Johnnie was cheating. I saw him. I know it. I saw him. And I refused to stand up and be a man. I let the Swede fight it out alone. And you—you were simply puffing around the place and wanting to fight. And then old Scully himself! We are all in it! This poor gambler isn't even a noun. He is kind of an adverb. Every sin is the result of a collaboration. We, five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede. Usually there are from a dozen to forty women really involved in every murder, but in this case it seems to be only five men—you, I, Johnnie, old Scully; and that fool of an unfortunate gambler came merely as a culmination, the apex of a human movement, and gets all the punishment."

The cowboy, injured and rebellious, cried out blindly into this fog of mysterious theory: "Well, I didn't do anythin', did I?"

1898, 1899

## THEODORE DREISER

(1871-1945)

Often termed the pioneer of naturalism in American letters, Theodore Dreiser equally deserves a place in our literature for his vigorous attack on the genteel tradition and his long and active interest in American social problems. His naturalism, different from Stephen Crane's,

was based on a mechanistic concept of life; yet the reader of his novels becomes increasingly aware of a strong element of spiritual query verging on mysticism, of an undertone of naïve romanticism that makes his works notably unlike those of Zola. These contrasting ele-

ments are present in all his fiction, from *Sister Carrie* (1900) to *The Bulwark* (1946).

Exceptionally responsive to environment, Dreiser found more than the usual stimulus for his writing in the disparity between the rich and the poor, the cultured sophisticate and the provincial, and the powerful and the weak members of society. The shattering effect of nineteenth-century science on traditional religious and social patterns, the emergence of new power groups, and the development of new theories in economics and political science vitally affected his writing.

One of several children of German immigrant parents, Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, and his early years were a series of exposures to poverty, emotional instability, and religious bigotry in the home, and of frequent moves dictated by financial necessity. By the time he entered Indiana University, which he attended for one year, the young man was understandably in a state of bewilderment and rebellion that made him eager for independence and financial success. The newspaper world offered an avenue of escape that led from the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* to Chicago and Pittsburgh. He learned the profession of journalism by which he later earned a living from several magazines, notably the Butterick publications and the brilliant, satirical *American Spectator* (1932-1937), in association with such younger stars as G. J. Nathan, Ernest Boyd, Cabell, O'Neill, and Sherwood Anderson.

It is difficult for a mid-century reader of *Sister Carrie* to understand why the book should have been withdrawn from publication in 1900. Certainly this was not the first discussion of immorality and spiritual decay in literature. The difference—and the furor—resulted from the fact that Dreiser dared write what people had often observed but did not wish to admit explicitly: that men and women do not always suffer in this life for transgressions of the social and moral code. The same circumstances that leave Carrie apparently untouched send Hurstwood to destruction; later Lester Kane in *Jennie Gerhardt* escapes, while Jennie suffers from their relationship.

This apparent helplessness in the face of inscrutable laws of fate and nature is the most obvious characteristic of Dreiser's fiction, but the years that followed the publication of *Jennie Gerhardt* in 1911 saw the development of other aspects of his philosophy as well. In the Cowperwood trilogy—*The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and the posthumously published *The Stoic* (1947)—all based on the life of Charles T. Yerkes, he explored the emotional and social ambitions of one of America's most startling financial buccanners, not only because he was obeying his newspaperman's instinct for a good story, but also because he was fascinated by the ruthless tactics of a man who had few illusions and deliberately set out to conquer life with the weapons of cleverness, dishonesty, and ambition. The autobio-

graphical volumes, *A Book About Myself* (1922) and *Dawn* (1931), reveal the author's early confusions, his struggles to find a successful pattern for life, and his groping for an explanation of the disparity between man's desires and his ultimate accomplishment. *The "Genius"* (1915), an account of an artist's life, is useful for its thinly disguised autobiographical descriptions of Dreiser's efforts to gain a literary foothold in New York.

In 1925 he published his best-known volume, *An American Tragedy*, an impressive work which became for a generation of Americans a synonym for literary naturalism. Dreiser utilized an actual murder as the basis of an exhaustive portrayal of a young man's tragic attempt to make a place for himself in a world whose demands he was incapable of meeting. The resolution—showing that Clyde Griffiths' crime was the result of environmental factors over which his weak nature had little control, and that society, with its aggressive materialism, was at the bar of judgment along with the criminal—was a powerful fictional appraisal of fundamental modern dilemmas.

While charges of verbosity

and lack of integration of characters can be made against Dreiser, these defects result from his photographic realism. His insistence that the writer, as clinician of the forces of nature, must report life as he sees it, and therefore must have freedom to do so, has had an immeasurable influence on younger writers and an even greater though less tangible impact on American life.

Dreiser's works, in addition to the novels mentioned above, include the accounts of his travels in the United States and Russia, *A Traveller at Forty*, 1913; *A Hoosier Holiday*, 1916; and *Dreiser Looks at Russia*, 1928. His plays were collected in *Plays of the Natural and the Supernatural*, 1916; and *The Hand of the Potter*, 1918. His short stories appeared in *Free and Other Stories*, 1918; and *Chains*, 1927. *Twelve Men*, 1919, is a series of sketches of friends and acquaintances; and *A Gallery of Women*, 1929, is a semifictional account of the personalities of various women. *Hey Rub-a-Dub-Dub*, 1920, is a series of philosophical essays. His poems appeared as *Moods, Cadenced and Declaimed*, 1926. Other less important volumes are *The Color of a Great City*, 1923; *My City*, 1929; *The Aspirant*, 1929; *Epitaph*, 1929; *Fine Furniture*, 1930; and *Tragic America*, 1931.

Critical biographies are Robert H. Elias, *Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature*, 1949, and F. O. Matthiessen, *Theodore Dreiser*, 1951. Of biographical interest is Helen Dreiser, *My Life with Dreiser*, 1951. Robert H. Elias has edited *Letters of Theodore Dreiser*, 3 vols., 1959.

## The Old Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>

He came to it across the new bridge, from the south where the greater city lay—the older portion—and where he had left his car, and paused at the nearer bridgehead to look at it—the eddying

1. "The Old Neighborhood" first appeared in *Metropolitan Magazine* for December, 1918, and was first collected

in *Chains: Lesser Novels and Stories* (1927), the source of the present text.

water of the river below, the new docks and piers built on either side since he had left, twenty years before; the once grassy slopes on the farther shore, now almost completely covered with factories, although he could see too, among them, even now, traces of the old, out-of-the-way suburb which he and Marie had known. Chadds Bridge, now an integral part of the greater city, connected by car lines and through streets, was then such a simple, unpretentious affair, a little suburban village just on the edge of this stream and beyond the last straggling northward streets of the great city below, where the car lines stopped and from which one had to walk on foot across this bridge in order to take advantage of the rural quiet and the cheaper—much cheaper—rents, so all-important to him then.

Then he was so poor—he and Marie—a mere stripling of a mechanic and inventor, a student of aeronautics, electricity, engineering, and what not, but newly married and without a dollar, and no clear conception of how his future was to eventuate, whereas now—but somehow he did not want to think of now. Now he was so very rich, comparatively speaking, older, wiser, such a forceful person commercially and in every other way, whereas then he was so lean and pathetic and worried and wistful—a mere uncertain stripling, as he saw himself now, with ideas and ambitions and dreams which were quite out of accord with his immediate prospects or opportunities. It was all right to say, as some one had—Emerson, he believed—“hitch your wagon to a star.”<sup>2</sup> But some people hitched, or tried to, before they were ready. They neglected some of the slower moving vehicles about them, and so did not get on at all—or did not seem to, for the time being.

And that had been his error. He was growing at the time, of course, but he was so restless, so dissatisfied with himself, so unhappy. All the world was apparently tinkling and laughing by, eating, drinking, dancing, growing richer, happier, every minute; whereas he—he and Marie, and the two babies which came a little later—seemed to make no progress at all. None. They were out of it, alone, hidden away in this little semi-rural realm, and it was all so disturbing when elsewhere was so much—to him, at least, if not to her—of all that was worth while—wealth, power, gayety, repute. How intensely, savagely almost, he had craved all of those things in those days, and how far off they still were at that time!

Marie was not like him, soft, clinging little thing that she was, inefficient in most big ways, and yet dear and helpful enough in all little ones—oh, so very much so.

2. From Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Civilization" in *Society and Solitude* (1870).

When first he met her in Philadelphia, and later when he brought her over to New York, it seemed as though he could not possibly have made a better engagement for himself. Marie was so sweet, so gentle, with her waxy white pallor, delicately tinted cheeks, soft blackish brown eyes that sought his so gently always, as if seeming to ask, "And what can I do for my dearie now? What can he teach me to do for him?" She was never his equal, mentally or spiritually—that was the dreadful discovery he had made a few months after the first infatuation had worn off, after the ivory of her forehead, the lambent sweetness of her eyes, her tresses, and her delicately rounded figure, had ceased to befuddle his more poetical brain. But how delightful she seemed then in her shabby little clothes and her shabbier little home—all the more so because her delicate white blossom of a face was such a contrast to the drear surroundings in which it shone. Her father was no more than a mechanic, she a little store clerk in the great Rand<sup>3</sup> department store in Philadelphia when he met her, he nothing more than an experimental assistant with the Culver Electric Company, with no technical training of any kind, and only dreams of a technical course at some time or other. The beginnings of his career were so very vague.

His parents were poor too, and he had had to begin to earn his own living, or share, at fourteen. And at twenty-four he had contracted this foolish marriage when he was just beginning to dream of bigger things, to see how they were done, what steps were necessary, what studies, what cogitations and hard, grinding sacrifices even, before one finally achieved anything, especially in the electrical world. The facts which had begun to rise and take color and classify themselves in his mind had all then to develop under the most advantageous conditions thereafter. His salary did not rise at once by any means, just because he was beginning to think of bigger things. He was a no better practical assistant in a laboratory or the equipment department of the several concerns for which he worked, because in his brain were already seething dim outlines of possible improvements in connection with arms, the turbine gun, electro-magnetic distance control, and the rotary excavator. He had ideas, but also as he realized at the time he would have to study privately and long in order to make them real; and his studies at night and Sundays and holidays in the libraries and everywhere else, made him no more helpful, if as much so, in his practical, everyday corporation labors. In fact, for a long time when their finances were at the lowest ebb and the two children had appeared, and they all needed clothes and diversion, and his salary had not been raised, it seemed as though he were actually less valuable to everybody.

3. There was no such store.

But in the meantime Marie had worked for and with him, dear little thing, and although she had seemed so wonderful at first, patient, enduring, thoughtful, later because of their poverty and so many other things which hampered and seemed to interfere with his work, he had wearied of her a little. Over in Philadelphia, where he had accompanied her home one evening and had watched her help her mother, saw her set the table, wash the dishes, straighten up the house after dinner, and then if it were pleasant go for a walk with him, she seemed ideal, just the wife for him, indeed. Later as he sensed the world, its hardness, its innate selfishness, the necessity for push, courage, unwillingness to be a slave and a drudge, these earlier qualities and charms were the very things that militated against her in his mind. Poor little Marie!

But in other ways his mind was not always on his work, either. Sometimes it was on his dreams of bigger things. Sometimes it was on his silly blindness in wanting to get married so soon, in being betrayed by the sweet innocence and beauty of Marie into saddling himself with this burden when he was scarcely prepared, as he saw after he was married, to work out his own life on a sensible, economic basis. A thought which he had encountered somewhere in some book of philosophy or other (he was always reading in those days) had haunted him—"He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune"<sup>4</sup>—and that painful thought seemed to grow with each succeeding day. Why had he been so foolish, why so very foolish, as to get married when he was so unsuitably young! That was a thing the folly of which irritated him all the time.

Not that Marie was not all she should be—far from it!—nor the two little boys (both boys, think of that!), intensely precious to him at first. No, that was not it, but this, that whatever the values and the charms of these (and they were wonderful at first), he personally was not prepared to bear or enjoy them as yet. He was too young, too restless, too nebulous, too inventively dreamful. He did not, as he had so often thought since, know what he wanted—only, when they began to have such a very hard time, he knew he did not want that. Why, after the first year of their marriage, when Peter was born, and because of better trade conditions in the electrical world, they had moved over here (he was making only twenty-two dollars a week at the time), everything had seemed to go wrong. Indeed, nothing ever seemed to go right any more after that, not one thing.

First it was Marie's illness after Peter's birth, which kept him on tenterhooks and took all he could rake and scrape and save to pay the doctor's bill, and stole half her beauty, if not more. She always

4. Sir Francis Bacon, "Of Marriage and Single Life," *Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (1625).

looked a little pinched and weak after that. (And he had charged that up to her, too!) Then it was some ailment which affected Peter for months and which proved to be undernourishment, due to a defect in Marie's condition even after she had seemingly recovered. Then, two years later, it was the birth of Frank, due to another error, of course, he being not intended in Marie's frail state; and then his own difficulties with the manager of the insulating department of the International Electric, due to his own nervous state, his worries, his consciousness of error in the manipulation of his own career—and Marie's. Life was slipping away, as he saw it then and he kept thinking he was growing older, was not getting on as he had thought he should, was not achieving his technical education; he was saddled with a family which would prevent him from ever getting on. Here, in this neighborhood, all this had occurred—this quiet, run-down realm, so greatly changed since he had seen it last. Yes, it had all happened here.

But how peaceful it was to-day, although changed. How the water ran under this bridge now, as then, eddying out to sea. And how this late October afternoon reminded him of that other October afternoon when they had first walked up here—warm, pleasant, colorful. Would he ever forget that afternoon? He had thought he was going to do so much better—was praying that he would, and they had done so much worse. He, personally, had grown so restless and dissatisfied with himself and her and life. And things seemed to be almost as bad as they could be, drifting indefinitely on to nothing. Indeed, life seemed to gather as a storm and break. He was discharged from the International Electric, due supposedly to his taking home for a night a battery for an experiment he was making but in reality because of the opposition of his superior, based on the latter's contempt for his constantly (possibly) depressed and dissatisfied air, his brooding mien, and some minor inattentions due to the state of his mind at the time.

Then, quite as swiftly (out of black plotting or evil thoughts of his own, perhaps), Peter had died of pneumonia. And three days later Frank. There were two funerals, two dreary, one-carriage affairs—he remembered that so well!—for they had no money; and his pawned watch, five dollars from Marie's mother, and seven chemical and electrical works sold to an old book man had provided the cash advance required by the undertaker! Then, spiritually, something seemed to break within him. He could not see this world, this immediate life in which he was involved, as having any significance in it for himself or any one after that. He could not stand it any more, the weariness, the boredom, the dissatisfaction with himself, the failure of himself, the sickening chain of disasters which had befallen this earlier adventure. And so—

But that was why he was here to-day, after all these years—twenty-four, to be exact—with his interest in this old region so keen, if so sad. Why, there—there!—was a flock of pigeons, just like those of old Abijah Hargot's, flying around the sky now, as then. And a curl of smoke creeping up from Tanzer's blacksmith shop, or the one that had succeeded it, just one block from this bridge. How well he remembered old Tanzer and his forge, his swelling muscles and sooty face! He had always nodded in such a friendly way as he passed and talked of the pest of flies and heat in summer. That was why he was pausing on this bridge to-day, just to see once more, to feel, standing in the pleasant afternoon sun of this October day and gazing across the swirling waters below at the new coal-pockets, the enlarged lamp works of the George C. Woodruff Company, once a mere shed hidden away at a corner of this nearest street and rented out here no doubt because it was cheap and Woodruff was just beginning—just as he did twenty-four years before. Time had sped by so swiftly. One's ideals and ideas changed so. Twenty years ago he would have given so much to be what he was now—rich and fairly powerful—and now—now— The beauty of this old neighborhood, to-day, even.

The buff school which crowned the rise beyond, and the broad asphalt of Edgewood Avenue leading up to the old five-story flat building—the only one out here, and a failure financially—in which he and Marie had had their miserable little apartment—here it was, still to be seen. Yes, it and so many other things were all here; that group of great oaks before old Hargot's door; the little red—if now rusted—weather-vane over his carriage house; the tall romantic tower of St. George's Episcopal Church—so far to the west over the river, and the spars and masts of vessels that still docked here for a while. But dark memories they generated, too, along with a certain idyllic sweetness, which had seemed to envelop the whole at first. For though it had had sweetness and peace at first, how much that had been bitter and spiritually destroying had occurred here, too.

How well he recalled, for instance, the day he and Marie had wandered up here, almost hand in hand, across this very bridge and up Edgewood Avenue, nearly twenty-four years before! They had been so happy at first, dreaming their little dream of a wonderful future for them—and now—well, his secret agency had brought him all there was to know of her and her mother and her little world after he had left. They had suffered so much, apparently, and all on account of him. But somehow he did not want to think of that now. It was not for that he had come to-day, but to see, to dream over the older, the better, the first days.

He crossed over, following the old road which had then been a



cobble wagon trail, and turned into Edgewood Avenue which led up past the line of semi-country homes which he used to dread so much, homes which because of their superior prosperity, wide lawns, flowers and walks, made the life which he and Marie were compelled to lead here seem so lean and meagre by contrast. Why, yes, here was the very residence of Gatewood, the dentist, so prosperous then and with an office downtown; and that of Dr. Newton, whom he had called in when Peter and Frank were taken ill that last time; and Temple, the druggist, and Stoutmeyer, the grocer—both of whom he had left owing money; and Dr. Newton, too, for that matter—although all had subsequently been paid. Not a sign of the names of either Gatewood or Newton on their windows or gates now; not a trace of Temple's drug store. But here was Stoutmeyer's grocery just the same. And Buchspiel, the butcher. (Could he still be alive, by any chance—was that his stout, aged figure within?) And Ortman, the baker—not a sign of change there. And over the way the then village school, now Public School No. 261, as he could see. And across from it, beyond, the slim little, almost accidental (for this region) five-story apartment house—built because of an error in judgment, of course, when they thought the city was going to grow out this way—a thing of grayish-white brick. On the fifth floor of this, in the rear, he and Marie had at last found a tiny apartment of three rooms and bath, cheap enough for them to occupy in the growing city and still pay their way. What memories the mere sight of the building evoked! Where were all the people now who used to bustle about here of a summer evening when he and Marie were here, boys and girls, grown men and women of the neighborhood? It had all been so pleasant at first, Marie up there preparing dinner and he coming home promptly at seven and sometimes whistling as he came! He was not always unhappy, even here.

Yes, all was exactly as it had been in the old days in regard to this building and this school, even—as he lived!—a "For Rent" sign in that very same apartment, four flights up, as it had been that warm October day when they had first come up here seeking.

But what a change in himself—stouter, so much older, gray now. And Marie—dying a few years after in this very region without his ever seeing her again or she him—and she had written him such pathetic letters. She had been broken, no doubt, spiritually and in every other way when he left her,—no pointless vanity in that, alas—it was too sad to involve vanity. Yes, he had done that. Would it ever be forgiven him? Would his error of ambition and self-dissatisfaction be seen anywhere in any kindly light—on earth or in heaven? He had suffered so from remorse in regard to it of late. Indeed, now that he was rich and so successful the thought of it had begun to torture him. Some time since—five years ago—he had

thought to make amends, but then—well, then he had found that she wasn't any more. Poor little Marie!

But these walls, so strong and enduring (stone had this advantage over human flesh!), were quite as he had left them, quite as they were the day he and Marie had first come here—hopeful, cheerful, although later so depressed, the two of them. (And he had charged her spiritually with it all, or nearly so—its fatalities and gloom, as though she could have avoided them!)

The ruthlessness of it!

The sheer brutality!

The ignorance!

If she could but see him now, his great shops and factories, his hundreds of employes, his present wife and children, his great new home—and still know how he felt about her! If he could only call her back and tell her, apologize, explain, make some amends! But no; life did not work that way. Doors opened and doors closed. It had no consideration for eleventh-hour repentances. As though they mattered to life, or anything else! He could tell her something now, of course, explain the psychology, let her know how pathetically depressed and weary he had felt then. But would she understand, care, forgive? She had been so fond of him, done so much for him in her small, sweet way. And yet, if she only knew, he could scarcely have helped doing as he did then, so harried and depressed and eager for advancement had he been, self-convinced of his own error and failure before ever his life had a good start. If she could only see how little all his later triumphs mattered now, how much he would be glad to do for her now! if only—only—he could. Well, he must quit these thoughts. They did not help at all, nor his coming out here and feeling this way!

But life was so automatic and unconsciously cruel at times. One's disposition drove one so, shutting and bolting doors behind one, driving one on and on like a harried steer up a narrow runway to one's fate. He could have been happy right here with Marie and the children—as much so as he had ever been since. Or, if he had only taken Marie along, once the little ones were gone—they might have been happy enough together. They might have been! But no, no; something in him at that time would not let him. Really, he was a victim of his own grim impulses, dreams, passions, mad and illogical as that might seem. He was crazy for success, wild with a desire for a superior, contemptuous position in the world. People were so, at times. He had been. He had had to do as he did, so horribly would he have suffered mentally if he had not, all the theories of the moralists to the contrary notwithstanding. The notions of one's youth were not necessarily those of age, and that was why he was here to-day in this very gloomy and contrite mood.

He went around the corner now to the side entrance of the old apartment house, and paused. For there, down the street, almost—not quite—as he had left it, was the residence of the quondam old Abijah Hargot, he of the pigeons,—iron manufacturer and Presbyterian, who even in his day was living there in spite of the fact that the truly princely residence suburbs had long since moved much farther out and he was being entirely surrounded by an element of cheaper life which could not have been exactly pleasant to him. In those days he and Marie had heard of the hardwood floors, the great chandeliers, the rugs and pictures of the house that had once faced a wide sward leading down to the river's edge itself. But look at it now! A lumber-yard between it and the river! And some sort of a small shop or factory on this end of the lawn! And in his day, Abijah had kept a pet Jersey cow nibbling the grass under the trees and fantailed pigeons on the slate roof of his barn, at the corner where now was this small factory, and at the back of his house an immense patch of golden glow just outside the conservatory facing the east, and also two pagodas down near the river. But all gone! all gone, or nearly so. Just the house and a part of the lawn. And occupied now by whom? In the old days he had never dared dream, or scarcely so, that some day, years later—when he would be much older and sadder, really, and haunted by the ghosts of these very things—he would be able to return here and know that he had far more imposing toys than old Hargot had ever dreamed of, as rich as he was.

Toys!

Toys!

Yes, they were toys, for one played with them a little while, as with so many things, and then laid them aside forever.

Toys!

Toys!

But then, as he had since come to know, old Hargot had not been without his troubles, in spite of all his money. For, as rumor had it then, his oldest son, Lucien, his pride, in those days, a slim, artistic type of boy, had turned out a drunkard, gambler, night-life lover; had run with women, become afflicted with all sorts of ills, and after his father had cut him off and driven him out (refusing to permit him even to visit the home), had hung about here, so the neighbors had said, and stolen in to see his mother, especially on dark or rainy nights, in order to get aid from her. And, like all mothers, she had aided him secretly, or so they said, in spite of her fear of her husband. Mothers were like that—his mother, too. Neighbors testified that they had seen her whispering to him in the shade of the trees of the lawn or around the corner in the next street—a sad, brooding, care-worn woman, always in black or dark blue.

Yes, life held its disappointments for every one, of course, even old Abijah and himself.

He went on to the door and paused, wondering whether to go up or not, for the atmosphere of this building and this neighborhood was very, very sad now, very redolent of old, sweet, dead and half-forgotten things. The river there, running so freshly at the foot of the street; the school where the children used to play and shout, while he worked on certain idle days when there was no work at the factory; the little church up the street to which so many commonplace adherents used to make their way on Sunday; the shabby cabin of the plumber farther up this same street, who used to go tearing off every Saturday and Sunday in a rattle-trap car which he had bought second-hand and which squeaked and groaned, for all the expert repairing he had been able to do upon it.

The color, the humor, the sunshine of those old first days, in spite of their poverty!

He hesitated as to whether to ring the bell or no—just as he and Marie had, twenty-odd years before. She was so gay then, so hopeful, so all-unconscious of the rough fate that was in store for her here. . . . How would it be inside? Would Marie's little gas stove still be near the window in the combined kitchen, dining-room and laundry—almost general living-room—which that one room was? Would the thin single gas jet still be hanging from the ceiling over their small dining-room table (or the ghost of it) where so often after their meals, to save heat in the other room—because there was no heat in the alleged radiator, and their oil stove cost money—he had sat and read or worked on plans of some of the things he hoped to perfect—and had since, years since, but long after he had left her and this place? How sad! He had never had one touch of luck or opportunity with her here,—not one. Yet, if only she could, and without pain because of it, know how brilliantly he had finished some of them, how profitably they had resulted for him if not her.

But he scarcely looked like one who would be wanting to see so small an apartment, he now felt, tall and robust and prosperous as he was. Still might he not be thinking of buying this place? Or renting quarters for a servant or a relative? Who should know? What difference did it make? Why should he care?

He rang the bell, thinking of the small, stupid, unfriendly and self-defensive woman who, twenty or more years before, had come up from the basement below, wiping her hands on a gingham apron and staring at them querulously. How well he remembered her—and how unfriendly she had always remained in spite of their efforts to be friendly, because they had no tips to give her. She could not be here any longer, of course; no, this one coming was unlike her

in everything except stupidity and grossness. But they were alike in that, well enough. This one was heavy, beefy. She would make almost two of the other one.

"The rooms," he had almost said "apartment," "on the top floor—may I see them?"

"Dey are only t'rec an' bat'—fourteen by der mont'."

"Yes, I know," he now added almost sadly. So they had not raised the rent in all this time, although the city had grown so. Evidently this region had become worse, not better. "I'll look at them, if you please, just the same," he went on, feeling that the dull face before him was wondering why he should be looking at them at all.

"Vait; I getcha der key. You can go up py yerself."

He might have known that she would never climb any four flights save under compulsion.

She returned presently, and he made his way upward, remembering how the fat husband of the former janitress had climbed up promptly every night at ten, if you please, putting out the wee lights of gas on the return trip (all but a thin flame on the second floor: orders from the landlord, of course), and exclaiming as he did so, at each landing, "Ach Gott, I go me up py der secon' floor ant make me der lights out. Ach Gott, I go me py der t'ird floor ant make me der lights out. Ach Gott, I go me py der fourt' floor ant make me der lights out," and so on until he reached the fifth, where they lived. How often he had listened to him, puffing and moaning as he came!

Yes, the yellowish-brown paper that they had abhorred then, or one nearly as bad, covered all these hall walls to-day. The stairs squeaked, just as they had then. The hall gas jets were just as small and surmounted by shabby little pink imitation glass candles—to give the place an air, no doubt! He and Marie would never have taken this place at all if it had depended on the hall, or if the views from its little windows had not been so fine. In the old days he had trudged up these steps many a night, winter and summer, listening, as he came, for sounds of Marie in the kitchen, for the prattle of the two children after they were with them, for the glow of a friendly light (always shining at six in winter) under the door and through the keyhole. His light! His door! In those early dark winter days, when he was working so far downtown and coming home this way regularly, Marie, at the sound of his key in the lock, would always come running, her heavy black hair done in a neat braid about her brow, her trim little figure buttoned gracefully into a house-dress of her own making. And she always had a smile and a "Hello, dearie; back again?" no matter how bad things were with them, how lean the little larder or the family purse. Poor little

Marie!

It all came back to him now as he trudged up the stairs and neared the door. God!

And here was the very door, unchanged—yellow, painted to imitate the natural grain of oak, but the job having turned out a dismal failure as he had noted years before. And the very lock the same! Could he believe? Scarcely any doubt of it. For here was that other old hole, stuffed with putty and painted over, which he and Marie had noted as being the scar of some other kind of a lock or knob that had preceded this one. And still stuffed with paper! Marie had thought burglars (!) might make their way in via that, and he had laughed to think what they would steal if they should. Poor little Marie!

But now, now—well, here he was all alone, twenty-four years later, Marie and Peter and Frank gone this long time, and he the master of so many men and so much power and so much important property. What was life, anyhow? What was it?

Ghosts! Ghosts!

Were there ghosts?

Did spirits sometimes return and live and dream over old, sad scenes such as this? Could Marie? Would she? Did she?

Oh, Marie! . . . Marie! Poor little weak, storm-beaten, life-beaten soul. And he the storm, really.

Well, here was the inside now, and things were not a bit different from what they had been in his and her day, when they had both been so poor. No, just the same. The floor a little more nail-marked, perhaps, especially in the kitchen here, where no doubt family after family had tacked down oil-cloth in place of other pieces taken up—theirs, for instance. And here in the parlor—save the mark!—the paper as violent as it had ever been! Such paper—red, with great bowls of pinkish flowers arranged in orderly rows! But then they were paying so little rent that it was ridiculous for them to suggest that they wanted anything changed. The landlord would not have changed it anyhow.

And here on the west wall, between the two windows, overlooking Abijah Hargot's home and the river and the creeping city beyond, was where he had hung a wretched little picture, a print of an etching of a waterscape which he had admired so much in those days and had bought somewhere second-hand for a dollar—a house on an inlet near the sea, such a house as he would have liked to have occupied, or thought he would—then. Ah, these windows! The northernmost one had always been preferred by him and her because of the sweep of view west and north. And how often he had stood looking at a soft, or bleak, or reddening, sunset over the river; or, of an early night in winter, at the lights on the water below. And

the outpost apartments and homes of the great city beyond. Life had looked very dark then, indeed. At times, looking, he had been very sad. He was like some brooding Hamlet of an inventor as he stood there then gazing at the sweet little river, the twinkling stars in a steely black sky overhead; or, in the fall when it was still light, some cold red island of a cloud in the sky over the river and the city, and wondering what was to become of him—what was in store for him! The fallacy of such memories as these! Their futility!

But things had dragged and dragged—here! In spite of the fact that his mind was full of inventions, inventions, inventions, and methods of applying them in some general way which would earn him money, place, fame—as they subsequently did—the strange mysteries of ionic or electronic action, for instance, of motion, of attraction and polarity, of wave lengths and tensile strengths and adhesions in metals, woods and materials of all kinds—his apparent error in putting himself in a position where failure might come to him had so preyed on his mind here, that he could do nothing. He could only dream, and do common, ordinary day labor—skeleton wiring and insulating, for instance, electrical mapping, and the like. Again, later, but while still here, since he had been reading, reading, reading after marriage, and working and thinking, life had gone off into a kind of welter of conflicting and yet organized and plainly directed powers which was confusing to him, which was not to be explained by anything man could think of and which no inventor had as yet fully used, however great he was—Edison, Kelvin, or Bell. Everything as he knew then and hoped to make use of in some way was alive, everything full of force, even so-called dead or decaying things. Life was force, that strange, seemingly (at times) intelligent thing, and there was apparently nothing but force—everywhere—amazing, perfect, indestructible. (He had thought of all that here in this little room and on the roof overhead where he made some of his experiments, watching old Hargot's pigeons flying about the sky, the sound of their wings coming so close at times that they were like a whisper of the waves of the sea, dreams in themselves.)

But the little boundaries of so-called health and decay, strength and weakness, as well as all alleged *fixity* or changelessness of things,—how he had brooded on all that, at that time. And how all thought of *fixity* in anything had disappeared as a ridiculous illusion intended, maybe, by something to fool man into the belief that his world here, his physical and mental state, was real and enduring, a greater thing than anything else in the universe, when so plainly it was not. But not himself. A mere shadow—an illusion—nothing. On this little roof, here, sitting alone at night or by day in pleasant weather or gray, Saturdays and Sundays when it was

warm and because they had no money and no particular place to go, and looking at the stars or the lights of the city or the sun shining on the waters of the little river below,—he had thought of all this. It had all come to him, the evanescence of everything, its slippery, protean changefulness. Everything was alive, and everything was nothing, in so far as its seeming reality was concerned. And yet everything was everything but still capable of being undermined, changed, improved, or come at in some hitherto undreamed-of way—even by so humble a creature as himself, an inventor—and used as chained force, if only one knew how. And that was why he had become a great inventor since—because he had thought so—had chained force and used it—even he. He had become conscious of anterior as well as ulterior forces and immensities and fathomless wells of wisdom and energy, and had enslaved a minute portion of them, that was all. But not here! Oh, no. Later!

The sad part of it, as he thought of it now, was that poor little Marie could not have understood a thing of all he was thinking, even if he had explained and explained, as he never attempted to do. Life was all a mystery to Marie—deep, dark, strange—as it was to him, only he was seeking and she was not. Sufficient to her to be near him, loving him in her simple, dumb way, not seeking to understand. Even then he had realized that and begun to condemn her for it in his mind, to feel that she was no real aid and could never be—just a mother-girl, a housewife, a social fixture, a cook, destined to be shoved back if ever he were really successful; and that was sad even then, however obviously true.

But to her, apparently, he was so much more than just a mere man—a god, really, a dream, a beau, a most wonderful person, dreaming strange dreams and thinking strange thoughts which would lead him heaven knows where; how high or how strange, though, she could never guess, nor even he then. And for that very reason—her blind, non-understanding adoration—she had bored him then, horribly at times. All that he could think of then, as he looked at her at times—after the first year or two or three, when the novelty of her physical beauty and charm had worn off and the children had come, and cares and worries due to his non-success were upon them—was that she was an honest, faithful, patient, adoring little drudge, but no more, and that was all she would ever be. Think of that! That was the way life was—the way it rewarded love! He had not begun to dislike her—no, that was not it—but it was because, as the philosopher had said, that in and through her and the babies he had given hostages to fortune, and that she was not exactly the type of woman who could further him as fast as he wished—that he had begun to weary of her. And that was practically the whole base of his objection to her,—not anything she did.



Yes, yes—it was that, *that*, that had begun to plague him as though he had consciously fastened a ball and chain on one foot and now never any more could walk quickly or well or be really free. Instead of being able to think on his inventions he was constantly being compelled to think on how he would make a living for her and them, or find ten more dollars, or get a new dress for Marie and shoes for the children! Or how increase his salary. That was the great and enduring problem all the time, and over and over here. Although healthy, vigorous and savagely ambitious, at that time, it was precisely because he was those things that he had rebelled so and had desired to be free. He was too strong and fretful as he could see now to endure so mean a life. It was that that had made him savage, curt, remote, indifferent so much of the time in these later days—here—And to her. And when she could not help it at all—poor little thing—did not know how to help it and had never asked him to marry her! Life had tinkled so in his ears then. It had called and called. And essentially, in his own eyes then, he was as much of a failure as a husband as he was at his work, and that was killing him. His mind had been too steadily depressed by his mistake in getting married, in having children so soon, as well as by his growing knowledge of what he might be fitted to do if only he had a chance to go off to a big technical school somewhere and work his way through alone and so get a new and better position somewhere else—to have a change of scene. For once, as he knew then, and with all his ideas, he was technically fitted for his work, with new light and experience in his mind, what wonders might he not accomplish! Sitting in this little room, or working or dreaming upstairs in the air, how often he had thought of all that!

But no; nothing happened for ever so long here. Days and weeks and months, and even years went by without perceptible change. Nature seemed to take a vicious delight in torturing him, then, in so far as his dreams were concerned, his hopes. Hard times came to America, blasting ones—a year and a half of panic really—in which every one hung on to his pathetic little place, and even he was afraid to relinquish the meagre one he had, let alone ask for more pay. At the same time his dreams, the passing of his youth, this unconscionable burden of a family, tortured him more and more. Marie did not seem to mind anything much, so long as she was with him. She suffered, of course, but more for him than for herself, for his unrest, and his dissatisfaction, which she feared. Would he ever leave her? Was he becoming unhappy with her? Her eyes so often asked what her lips feared to frame.

Once they had seventy dollars saved toward some inventive work of his. But then little Peter fell from the top of the washtub,

where he had climbed for some reason, and broke his arm. Before it was healed and all the bills paid, the seventy was gone. Another time Marie's mother was dying, or so she thought, and she had to go back home and help her father and brother in their loneliness. Again, it was brother George who, broke, arrived from Philadelphia and lived with them a while because he had no place else to go. Also once he thought to better himself by leaving the International Electric, and joining the Winston Castro Generator Company. But when he had left the first, the manager of the second, to whom he had applied and by whom he had been engaged, was discharged ("let out," as he phrased it), and the succeeding man did not want him. So for three long months he had been without anything, and, like Job, finally, he had been ready to curse God and die.<sup>5</sup>

And then—right here in these rooms it was—he had rebelled, spiritually, as he now recalled, and had said to himself that he could not stand this any longer, that he was ruining his life, and that however much it might torture Marie—ruin her even—he must leave and do something to better his state. Yes quite definitely, once and for all, then, he had wished that he had not married Marie, that they had never been so foolish as to have children, that Marie was not dependent on him any more, that he was free to go, be, do, all the things he felt that he could go do, be—no matter where, so long as he went and was free. Yes, he had wished that in a violent, rebellious, prayerful way, and then—

Of all the winters of his life, the one that followed that was the blackest and bleakest, that last one with Marie. It seemed to bring absolutely nothing to either him or her or the children save disaster. Twenty-five dollars was all he had ever been able to make, apparently, while he was with her. The children were growing and constantly requiring more; Marie needed many things, and was skimping along on God knows what. Once she had made herself some corset slips and other things out of his cast-off underwear—bad as that was! And then once, when he was crossing Chadds Bridge, just below here, and had paused to meditate and dream, a new hat—his very best, needless to say, for he had worn his old one until it was quite gone—had blown off into the water, a swift wind and some bundles he was compelled to carry home aiding, and had been swiftly carried out by the tide. So much had he been harried in those days by one thing and another that at first he had not even raged, although he was accustomed so to do. Instead then he had just shut his teeth and trudged on in the biting wind, in danger of taking cold and dying of something or other—as he had

5. It was the wife of Job who said, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die" (Job ii: 9).

thought at the time—only then he had said to himself that he did not really mind now. What difference did it make to himself or anybody whether he died or not? Did anybody care really, God or anybody else, what became of him? Supposing he did it? What of it? Could it be any worse than this? To hell with life itself, and its Maker,—this brutal buffeting of winds and cold and harrying hungers and jealousies and fears and brutalities, arranged to drive and make miserable these crawling, beggarly creatures—men! Why, what had he ever had of God or any creative force so far? What had God ever done for him or his life, or his wife and children?

So he had defiantly raged.

And then life—or God, or what you will—had seemed to strike at last. It was as if some Jinnee<sup>6</sup> of humane or inhuman power had said, "Very well, then, since you are so dissatisfied and unhappy, so unworthy of all this (perhaps) that I have given you, you shall have your will, your dreams. You have prayed to be free. Even so—this thing that you see here now shall pass away. You have sinned against love and faith in your thoughts. You shall be free! Look! Behold! You shall be! Your dreams shall come true!"

And then, at once, as if in answer to this command of the Jinnee, as though, for instance, it had waved its hand, the final storm began which blew everything quite away. Fate struck. It was as if black angels had entered and stationed themselves at his doors and windows, armed with the swords of destruction, of death. Harpies and furies beset his path and perched on his roof. One night—it was a month before Peter and Frank died, only three days before they contracted their final illness—he was crossing this same bridge below here and was speculating, as usual, as to his life and his future, when suddenly, in spite of the wind and cold and some dust flying from a coal barge below, his eye was attracted by two lights which seemed to come dancing down the hill from the direction of his apartment and passed out over the river. They rose to cross over the bridge in front of him and disappeared on the other side. They came so close they seemed almost to brush his face, and yet he could not quite accept them as real. There was something too eerie about them. From the moment he first laid eyes on them in the distance they seemed strange. They came so easily, gracefully, and went so. From the first moment he saw them there below Tegetmiller's paint shop, he wondered about them. What were they? What could they mean? They were so bluish clear, like faint, grey stars, so pale and watery. Suddenly it was as if something whispered to him, "Behold! These are the souls of your children. They are going—never to return! See! Your prayers are being answered!"

And then it was that, struck with a kind of horror and numb

6. In Moslem belief a supernatural being subject to magic control.

despair, he had hurried home, quite prepared to ask Marie if the two boys were dead or if anything had happened to them. But, finding them up and playing as usual he had tried to put away all thought of this fact as a delusion, to say nothing. But the lights haunted him. They would not stay out of his mind. Would his boys really die? Yet the first and the second day went without change. But on the third both boys took sick, and he knew his dread was well founded.

For on the instant, Marie was thrown into a deep, almost inexplicable, depression, from which there was no arousing her, although she attempted to conceal it from him by waiting on and worrying over them. They had to put the children in the one little bedroom (theirs), while they used an extension cot in the "parlor," previously occupied by the children. Young Dr. Newton, the one physician of repute in the neighborhood, was called in, and old Mrs. Wetzell, the German woman in front, who, being old and lonely and very fond of Marie, had volunteered her services. And so they had weathered along, God only knows how. Marie prepared the meals—or nearly all of them—as best she could. He had gone to work each day, half in a dream, wondering what the end was to be.

And then one night, as he and Marie were lying on the cot pretending to sleep, he felt her crying. And taking her in his arms he had tried to unwish all the dark things he had wished, only apparently then it was too late. Something told him it was. It was as though in some dark mansion somewhere—some supernal court or hall of light or darkness—his prayer had been registered and answered, a decision made, and that that decision could not now be unmade. No. Into this shabby little room where they lay and where she was crying had come a final black emissary, scaled, knightly, with immense arms and wings and a glittering sword, all black, and would not leave until all this should go before him. Perhaps he had been a little deranged in his mind at the time, but so it had seemed.

And then, just a few weeks after he had seen the lights and a few days after Marie had cried so, Peter had died—poor weak little thing that he was—and, three days later, Frank. Those terrible hours! For by then he was feeling so strange and sad and mystical about it all that he could neither eat nor sleep nor weep nor work nor think. He had gone about, as indeed had Marie, in a kind of stupor of misery and despair. True, as he now told himself—and then too, really,—he had not loved the children with all the devotion he should have or he would never have had the thoughts he had had—or so he had reasoned afterward. Yet then as now he suffered because of the love he should have given them, *and had not—*

and now could not any more, save in memory. He recalled how both boys looked in those last sad days, their pinched little faces and small weak hands! Marie was crushed, and yet dearer for the time being than ever before. But the two children, once gone, had seemed the victims of his own dark thoughts as though his own angry, resentful wishes had slain them. And so, for the time, his mood changed. He wished, if he could, that he might undo it all, go on as before with Marie, have other children to replace these lost ones in her affection—but no. It was apparently not to be, not ever any more.

For, once they were gone, the cords which had held him and Marie together were weaker, not stronger—almost broken, really. For the charm which Marie had originally had for him had mostly been merged in the vivacity and vitality and interest of these two prattling curly-headed boys. Despite the financial burden, the irritation and drain they had been at times, they had also proved a binding chain, a touch of sweetness in the relationship, a hope for the future, a balance which had kept even this uneven scale. With them present he had felt that however black the situation it must endure because of them, their growing interests; with them gone, it was rather plain that some modification of their old state was possible—just how, for the moment, he scarcely dared think or wish. It might be that he could go away and study for awhile now. There was no need of his staying here. The neighborhood was too redolent now of the miseries they had endured. Alone somewhere else, perhaps, he could collect his thoughts, think out a new program. If he went away he might eventually succeed in doing better by Marie. She could return to her parents in Philadelphia for a little while and wait for him, working there at something as she had before until he was ready to send for her. The heavy load of debts could wait until he was better able to pay them. In the meantime, also, he could work and whatever he made over and above his absolute necessities might go to her—or to clearing off these debts.

So he had reasoned.

But it had not worked out so of course. No. In the broken mood in which Marie then was it was not so easy. Plainly, since he had run across her that April day in Philadelphia when he was wiring for the great dry goods store, her whole life had become identified with his, although his had not become merged with hers. No. She was, and would be, as he could so plainly see, then, nothing without him, whereas he—he— Well, it had long since been plain that he would be better off without her—materially, anyhow. But what would she do if he stayed away a long time—or never came back? What become? Had he thought of that then? Yes, he had. He had

even thought that once away he might not feel like renewing this situation which had proved so disastrous. And Marie had seemed to sense that, too. She was so sad. True he had not thought of all these things in any bold outright fashion then. Rather they were as sly, evasive shadows skulking in the remote recesses of his brain, things which scarcely dared show their faces to the light, although later, once safely away—they had come forth boldly enough. Only at that time, and later—even now, he could not help feeling that however much Marie might have lacked originally, or then, the fault for their might was his,—that if he himself had not been so dull in the first instance all these black things would not have happened to him or to her. But could she go on without him? Would she? he had asked himself then. And answered that it would be better for him to leave and build himself up in a different world, and then return and help her later. So he fretted and reasoned.

But time had solved all that, too. In spite of the fact that he could not help picturing her back there alone with her parents in Philadelphia, their poor little cottage in Leigh Street in which she and her parents had lived—not a cottage either, but a minute little brick pigeon-hole in one of those long lines of red, treeless, smoky barracks flanking the great mills of what was known as the Reffington District, where her father worked—he had gone. He had asked himself what would she be doing there? What thinking, all alone without him—the babies dead? But he had gone.

He recalled so well the day he left her—she to go to Philadelphia, he to Boston, presumably—the tears, the depression, the unbelievable sadness in her soul and his. Did she suspect? Did she foreknow? She was so gentle, even then, so trustful, so sad. “You will come back to me, dearie, won’t you, soon?” she had said, and so sadly. “We will be happy yet, won’t we?” she had asked between sobs. And he had promised. Oh yes; he had done much promising in his life, before and since. That was one of the darkest things in his nature, his power of promising.

But had he kept that?

However much in after months and years he told himself that he wanted to, that he must, that it was only fair, decent, right, still he had not gone back. No. Other things had come up with the passing of the days, weeks, months, years, other forces, other interests. Some plan, person, desire had always intervened, interfered, warned, counseled, delayed. Were there such counselors? There had been times during the first year when he had written her and sent her a little money—money he had needed badly enough himself. Later there was that long period in which he felt that she must be getting along well enough, being with her parents and at work, and he had not written. A second woman had already

appeared on the scene by then as a friend. And then—

The months and years since then in which he had not done so! After his college course—which he took up after he left Marie, working his way—he had left Boston and gone to K—— to begin a career as an assistant plant manager and a developer of ideas of his own, selling the rights to such things as he invented to the great company with which he was connected. And then it was that by degrees the idea of a complete independence and a much greater life had occurred to him. He found himself so strong, so interesting to others. Why not be free, once and for all? Why not grow greater? Why not go forward and work out all the things about which he had dreamed? The thing from which he had extricated himself was too confining, too narrow. It would not do to return. The old shell could not now contain him. Despite her tenderness, Marie was not significant enough. So— He had already seen so much that he could do, be, new faces, a new world, women of a higher social level.

But even so, the pathetic little letters which still followed from time to time—not addressed to him in his new world (she did not know where he was), but to him in the old one—saying how dearly she loved him, how she still awaited his return, that she knew he was having a hard time, that she prayed always, and that all would come out right yet, that they would be able to be together yet!—she was working, saving, praying for him! True, he had the excuse that for the first four years he had not really made anything much, but still he might have done something for her,—might he not have?—gone back, persuaded her to let him go, made her comfortable, brought her somewhat nearer him even? Instead he had feared, feared, reasoned, argued.

Yes, the then devil of his nature, his ambition, had held him completely. He was seeing too clearly the wonder of what he might be, and soon, what he was already becoming. Everything as he argued then and saw now would have had to be pushed aside for Marie, whereas what he really desired was that his great career, his greater days, his fame, the thing he was sure to be now—should push everything aside. And so— Perhaps he had become sharper, colder, harder, than he had ever been, quite ready to sacrifice everything and everybody, or nearly, until he should be the great success he meant to be. But long before this he might have done so much. And he had not—had not until very recently decided to revisit this older, sweeter world.

But in the meantime, as he had long since learned, how the tragedy of her life had been completed. All at once in those earlier years all letters had ceased, and time slipping by—ten years really—he had begun to grow curious. Writing back to a neighbor of hers

in Philadelphia in a disguised hand and on nameless paper, he had learned that nearly two years before her father had died and that she and her mother and brother had moved away, the writer could not say where. Then, five years later, when he was becoming truly prosperous, he had learned, through a detective agency, that she and her mother and her ne'er-do-well brother had moved back into this very neighborhood—this old neighborhood of his and hers!—or, rather, a little farther out near the graveyard where their two boys were buried. The simplicity of her! The untutored homing instinct!

But once here, according to what he had learned recently, she and her mother had not prospered at all. They had occupied the most minute of apartments farther out, and had finally been compelled to work in a laundry in their efforts to get along—and he was already so well-to-do, wealthy, really! Indeed three years before his detectives had arrived, her mother had died, and two years after that, she herself, of pneumonia, as had their children. Was it a message from her that had made him worry at that time? Was that why, only six months since, although married and rich and with two daughters by this later marriage, he had not been able to rest until he had found this out, returned here now to see? Did ghosts still stalk the world?

Yes, to-day he had come back here, but only to realize once and for all now how futile this errand was, how cruel he had been, how dreary her latter days must have been in this poor, out-of-the-way corner where once, for a while at least, she had been happy—he and she.

“Been happy!”

“By God,” he suddenly exclaimed, a passion of self-reproach and memory overcoming him, “I can’t stand this! It was not right, not fair. I should not have waited so long. I should have acted long, long since. The cruelty—the evil! There is something cruel and evil in it all, in all wealth, all ambition, in love of fame—too cruel. I must get out! I must think no more—see no more.”

And hurrying to the door and down the squeaking stairs, he walked swiftly back to the costly car that was waiting for him a few blocks below the bridge—that car which was so representative of the realm of so-called power and success of which he was now the master—that realm which, for so long, had taken its meaningless lustre from all that had here preceded it—the misery, the loneliness, the shadow, the despair. And in it he was whirled swiftly and gloomily away.





# The Twentieth Century: Literary Renaissance and Social Challenge



Recent generations of writers have been concerned possibly more than ever before with immediate problems, both spiritual and social; and these problems have assumed world dimensions in consequence of mammoth and historic changes in society. The American literature of this age has been one of urgency and power. If it has reflected the violence and the upheavals of the century, it has also been humanized and enriched by restless and imaginative curiosity, by spiritual hunger, and by the search for understanding and wisdom. It has commanded a vast audience far beyond our shores and has become in fact a world literature, exerting an influence comparable to that of American material progress during the same period.

Twentieth-century spiritual unrest and skepticism were deeply rooted in nineteenth-century thought. The great English Victorians, from Matthew Arnold to Thomas Hardy, con-

tributed to its growth, while in the United States it was transmitted to the twentieth century by such writers as William James, Santayana, Henry Adams, Garland, Dreiser, Moody, and Robinson. Similarly, the spirit of economic and social revolt can be traced without interruption from the later works of Twain and Howells to those of Sherwood Anderson, Sandburg, and Lewis. Twentieth-century realism and naturalism, as well as new experiments in literary form, continued to draw inspiration from such nineteenth-century masters as Dostoevski and Turgenev, Balzac, Zola, Flaubert, and the French symbolists; and from such transitional European writers as Hardy and George Moore, Ibsen and Shaw, Gide, Yeats, and Synge. Romanticism became a mere genteel survival; Poe and Melville were more highly esteemed than Irving or Longfellow; Whitman, largely neglected by Americans during his life, exerted a power-

ful influence; Emily Dickinson, posthumously published in 1890, became a living force after 1914; and Henry James, an exotic to his American contemporaries, entered the mid-stream of twentieth-century literature, influencing authors as widely different as Edith Wharton and T. S. Eliot.

#### TWENTIETH-CENTURY RENAISSANCE

By 1920, directly after the first World War, it was evident that a new age of literary expression was already well advanced. The volume of American literary activity, the large number of new authors—critics, poets, novelists, and playwrights—the high level of their powers, the originality, daring, and general success of many new forms of expression, and the absorbed response of a reading public larger and more critical than ever before, produced a new national literature at least as brilliant as the regional flowering of New England nearly a century earlier. The widely used phrase “twentieth-century renaissance” seems scarcely too pretentious to describe what was occurring.

Actually, however, the nature of this twentieth-century renaissance, and its dominant expression, had already been established during the second decade of the century; the temporary absorption of the country in the World War from 1917 to 1919 barely interrupted the tide of new literature, although it provided fresh themes and focused even more sharply the spiritual problems and disillusionments of this critical generation of

writers. If the war is regarded as a point of intellectual intensification and broadening experience, there may be some usefulness in the historical identification of the years before the war as a “little renaissance,” distinguishing them from the full tide of accomplishment after 1920, when writers already established shared with younger newcomers in the expression of the mingled malaise, desire for social experiment, and tempered hope of the postwar generation. However, the years from about 1910 to V-E Day in 1945, ending World War II, may be viewed as a single literary period, punctuated and modified by World War I; by the financial crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression; by the “New Deal” recovery after 1933; and by World War II. The dominant character of this literature is its intensity and the almost scientific candor of its explorations into the spiritual nature of man and the value of his society and institutions, in an age of clashing ideologies during which American life, and established concepts of human faith, had to be reconstructed or defended.

By 1910 the nature of the new age was suggested in recent works of such writers as Henry James, William James, Henry Adams, Moody, Robinson, Gertrude Stein, Norris, London, Upton Sinclair, and Steffens. In 1911 Dreiser published *Jennie Gerhardt*, his first novel since 1900. In rapid succession appeared *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), and *The “Genius”* (1915), establishing

him as the great realist of his generation, and giving encouragement to the nascent naturalism of younger authors. In 1911 Edith Wharton temporarily abandoned the tradition of Henry James, producing in *Ethan Frome* a small naturalistic masterpiece of immediate influence. Ellen Glasgow in the same year published *The Miller of Old Church*, her first realistic novel of the soil.

It was also in 1911 that Ezra Pound, who had published his first *Personae* in 1909 in London, joined forces with T. E. Hulme, a young British thinker, in giving direction to the youthful group of American and British poets in London who soon were known as the imagists. They inaugurated the "new poetry" movement, published aesthetic manifestoes, attracted such American poets as "H.D.," William Carlos Williams, and Amy Lowell, and collected their poems in imagist anthologies. Their poems stimulated the development of free verse and other experimental forms. They contributed to the success of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, founded in Chicago in 1912, which was destined to become an important vehicle for the astonishing flood of new and vital poetry. During this period Robinson reached the height of his poetic power with *The Man Against the Sky* (1916) and *Merlin* (1917). Frost published his first volume in 1913; by 1923, when his fourth volume appeared, the world had seen the bulk of his best-known poems. A midwestern balladist, Vachel

Lindsay, won a meteoric fame in three volumes between 1913 and 1917. The vital poetic criticism of midwestern life began with Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* in 1915; but even more impressive was the poetry of Sandburg who, in three volumes between 1916 and 1920, explored the lives of his midwestern commoners in a powerful free verse at once coarse and tender. Edna St. Vincent Millay published her first spectacular book of poems in 1917; T. S. Eliot, in two volumes published by 1920, appeared at once in his mature character, unique and powerful.

In this period a vigorous criticism was fostered by such writers as More, Babbitt, Hunker, Spingarn, Van Wyck Brooks, and Mencken. The latter had begun his crusade before 1910, and he reached the height of his satirical effectiveness as editor of the *American Mercury* after 1924. Essentially a conservative individualist, he waged unceasing war on the mass mind, excoriating alike the cultural imbecilities of *hoi polloi*, the sterile conventionality of the middle-class mind, the venality of political leaders, and the deference of high society toward Europe. He was a liberator: he directed his eloquent wrath against prohibitionists and puritans, against well-paid guardians of other people's morals, against the defenders of official "decency." He championed such "immoral" authors as Dreiser, Cabell, and Sherwood Anderson.

Cabell and Anderson were only two of many new experi-

mentalists in fiction who had commanded attention before 1920. In a number of novels, of which *Jurgen* (1919) was best known, Cabell daringly infused medieval romance with somewhat too obvious sexual symbolism. The same year, in *Winesburg, Ohio*, Sherwood Anderson first exerted his influence as a pessimistic social critic and the subtle master of intense psychological motivations. Upton Sinclair, who had begun his attack on industrial capitalism in *The Jungle* (1906), was now publishing such books as *King Coal* (1917) and *The Brass Check* (1919). Ernest Poole, in *The Harbor* (1915), studied the degradation of the dock workers; Winston Churchill gained popular following with such liberal ethical novels as *The Inside of the Cup* (1913) and *A Far Country* (1915). Willa Cather, who was to make a great contribution to both symbolic fiction and regional realism, produced in *O Pioneers!* (1913), her first novel of the Nebraska frontier and the new immigrant Americans who enriched it with their lives. She returned to this theme in *My Antonia* (1918), but meanwhile she had combined it, in *The Song of the Lark* (1915), with her discovery of the desert civilization of the Southwest, on which she later based her masterpiece, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927).

Thus, by the time the Treaty of Versailles ended World War I, many of the powerful authors of this century had already created a new literature of enduring merit, characterized by

aesthetic originality and rebellion, by the determination to shatter conventional taboos in their expression of physical and psychological actuality, by a mystical hunger for spiritual enlightenment which attracted them toward symbolic or primitivistic expression, and by a growing sense of responsibility for their fellow human beings, expressed in the directness of their attack upon the contemporary social order. Theirs was not the merely sentimental concern for the individual in society that had actuated humanitarian social critics a century earlier. Their target was the total society and its fundamental institutions; they were dedicated to the task of confirming the dignity and value of man in the face of complex new forces and ideas that threatened to dehumanize him. Authors in the generations younger than Dreiser, who had published many of his important works by 1915, have not adhered so rigorously to the formula of the naturalist Zola, yet our literature has continued to be preoccupied with the question of the extent of man's opportunity, as compared with that of other animals, to escape the determination of his fate by blind laws of heredity, environment, and survival. Characteristic influences of naturalism are apparent in the "hard-boiled" style of Hemingway's early work and that of many successors; naturalism is mingled with primitivism in the novels of Steinbeck and Faulkner, and with primitivistic and Freudian elements in Jeffers, Caldwell, and O'Neill; it is reflected in the presentation of

the strict relations between environment and fate illustrated by the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy (1932-1935) of Farrell, and in the Marxist criticism of history best exemplified by Dos Passos in *U.S.A.* (1930-1936). Indeed, the events of the first World War and its aftermath only strengthened the growing belief that history is a mechanism responding to the obdurate dynamics of force and mass, rather than to the collective good will of men or to inspired leadership.

#### WORLD WAR I

To the authors of the 1920's, the architects of the second phase of our twentieth-century literature, the stupendous totality and horror of a world war was an inescapable demonstration of this mechanistic theory of history and human life. The human personality was dwarfed as much by the dehumanizing magnitude of modern events as by the obdurate tendency of natural laws to deny mankind a special destiny. The diminishment of individual identity has been intensified ever since by the depersonalizing bigness of industry and national affairs, the astronomical growth of populations in a mass civilization, the tendency of scientific knowledge to outrun humane controls, and the continued success of individual corruption and national aggression under the very shadow of recurrent and total warfare.

This crisis of mankind, and its consequent anxieties and tensions, has remained a dominant motivation of our literature to the very present, but the authors who faced the world of the 1920's had a more im-

mediate cause of disillusionment. Since the armistice of November 11, 1918, they had witnessed the tragic failure of the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations—after a war which liberals and writers, as well as the American masses, had supported as a crusade to “end war,” to “make the world safe for democracy,” and to effect “a lasting peace founded on honor and justice.” Wilson’s Fourteen Points in 1918 sincerely represented this idealism, yet the European statesmen who accepted his preliminary conditions for a peace conference had already made secret agreements to promote French and British imperialism, and to perpetuate the explosive dangers in European life. The isolationist fears and selfish provinciality which obstructed President Wilson’s idealism at home contributed to the success of his diplomatic enemies abroad, and although many historians now view these events in a different perspective, the important fact for literary history is the vast disillusionment of American liberals and writers, which coincided with the national extravagances, corruptions, and social decadence of the so-called Jazz Age, during the 1920's.

The earliest literary manifestations of this age recorded the revolt of youth, but the large body of writings attesting the condition of “flaming youth” or the delinquency of the “flapper” has left for posterity only the wit and daring of Edna Millay’s earlier poems, and the first novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who remains the historian of

this generation of young sophisticates. However, it would be a mistake to ignore their revolt, for to some degree it expressed the same attitudes that Mencken was displaying, and in the same disguise of meaningful badinage and uproar it revealed the spiritual perturbations which the greatest of our authors soon embodied in more enduring works. Youth was repelled by the reactionary sham and hypocrisy on every hand; by the "Red scares," witch-hunting, and prohibition fostered by the one-hundred-percent patriots and the new "puritans." This generation of "flaming" youth was actually a-fire with social revolt. However disorderly its noisy mixture of Byronism, Bohemianism, and gaiety, its object was the destruction of unhealthy psychological taboos; if it uncritically championed both Cabell's somewhat shallow *Jurgen* (1919) and Joyce's great *Ulysses* (1922), its object was to defeat the unfair censorship of both volumes.

The general disenchantment of serious writers after the war was only increased by the shocking prevalence of corruption and irresponsibility both in government and in private enterprise. In the years that followed, the European economies were crushed, while the United States became the economic capital of the world. But amid soaring prices, production, and profits, there was a brooding discontent among labor. The notorious scandals of the Harding administration (1920-1923) recalled the Gilded Age, while organized crime, thriving on the violation of the unpopular prohibition

laws and the venality of officials, produced an era of violence, terror, and moral delinquency. In spite of the conservative policies of Coolidge (1923-1929) the tide of inflation and expansion swept on until 1929, when the country plunged into the depths of its greatest financial depression.

Yet this decade, from 1919 to 1929, produced the greatest body of our twentieth-century literature. In general the new authors of the period responded, in various ways, to the social and moral confusions that have been described. Expatriation was an early symptom of their restlessness. Such authors as Pound, Eliot, MacLeish, Hemingway, and Edmund Wilson, thronging in the literary "colonies" of London or Paris, or in Italy or elsewhere, were not "a lost generation," as Gertrude Stein in Paris asserted, for they ultimately promoted the absorption of reinvigorating European influences into contemporary American writing. The war itself provided a vital subject for many new authors. It inspired the first novel of Dos Passos, but he did not win attention until 1921, when he published a second war novel, *Three Soldiers*. Eliot was already well known when he published *The Waste Land* (1922), but it established his greatness and dramatically advanced the pessimistic conclusion that the war was a final evidence of the collapse of Western civilization beneath the weight of materialism. Hemingway drew directly upon the spiritual consequences of the war in his early masterpieces,

*In Our Time* (1924), *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), contrasting the hard and wounded gallantry of individuals with the soft decadence of society. In the flourishing new theater, *What Price Glory* (1924), a tough and naturalistic transcript of the war, gave Maxwell Anderson (co-author with Laurence Stallings) his earliest success. Faulkner's first major work was a war novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, in 1926.

Other authors, responding to a variety of influences, gained prominence in other areas of literary revolt. Lewis, in *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922), appeared as the satirist of the patterned dullness of bourgeois success and the small-town mentality, while in 1925 Dreiser, in *An American Tragedy*, and Dos Passos, in *Manhattan Transfer*, pursued the theme of materialism in novels both naturalistic and tragic. During 1925 also, audiences were seeing, in George Kelly's tragedy of *Craig's Wife*, the ruin of a marriage by materialism, and Fitzgerald, in his masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, showed its consequences in terms of the fabulous high living, wild speculation, and organized criminality of the period.

The psychological probing of the spiritual personality, still continued by such earlier authors as Sherwood Anderson, Robinson, and Willa Cather, was augmented by the work of powerful new recruits. One was the brilliant Eugene O'Neill, who between 1919 and 1922 founded a new theater of spir-

itual symbolism, with such plays as *Anna Christie*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Emperor Jones*, and *The Hairy Ape*. Freudian conclusions appeared in the poems of Jeffers, beginning with *Tamar* (1924) and *Roan Stallion* (1925), and in the later novels of Faulkner, beginning with *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).

In the same year the powerful young voice of Thomas Wolfe was heard in *Look Homeward, Angel*, the first of the succession of novels in which he reflected the search of a spiritually homeless younger generation for a sense of unity with a world apparently so vast, complex, and impersonal. Wolfe's vitality and natural optimism were in contrast with the mood then possessing Archibald MacLeish, who embodied the darkness of youth in such poems as *The Hamlet of A. MacLeish* (1928).

#### POETRY AND DRAMA

One of the most noteworthy phenomena of this literary revival was the opulence, power, and popularity of poetry and drama, forms which had been relatively dormant for a longer period than fiction. The imagist and free-verse movements lost their momentum during the war, but such poets as Eliot, Jeffers, and MacLeish, in post-war works that have already been mentioned, gave new directions and new strength to American poetry.

In general our poetry in this century, until the time of the second World War, became increasingly subtle in its symbolism, more reliant upon allusions to earlier literary works or to

suggestions of mythological meaning, and more inclined toward intellectual depth or brilliance rather than sheerly lyrical appeal. The imagists and Pound had found inspiration in the French symbolists, the classics, the troubadour poets, the Italian Renaissance, and even ancient Chinese and Japanese forms of verse. The crudition of Eliot emphasized, besides these sources, the inspiration of philosophy, religious thought, Eastern mysticism, and anthropological lore. Eliot and others rediscovered not only the Elizabethan poets and dramatists but also the English metaphysical poets of the Jacobean period, of whom John Donne was the most powerful exemplar.

The intense and often violent metaphysical image heightened the intellectual tension and symbolic range of poetry, making it more difficult, but also more capable as an instrument for representing by abstraction the emotional significance of ideas. Metaphysical tendencies characterized the poetry of MacLeish, Stevens, Williams, Marianne Moore, Cummings, Crane, and the Nashville "Fugitives," principally Ransom and Tate.

Much poetry of great interest or noble loftiness has resulted from this symbolist movement, although the tendency of critics to give this intellectual expression their sole attention has resulted in the apparent if not actual critical disparagement of great poets of other and simpler schools of expression, and in the gradual diminishment of the appeal of poetry to a wide audience.

American drama between the two wars became for the first time a widely recognized instrument of national expression, involving the intellectual and emotional life, as well as the urban and national problems, of the United States. During the first two decades of the century our theater, while flourishing, had relied principally on the long-established conventions of the drama. Slowly, however, it responded to the experimental, symbolic, and critical drama from abroad; to the influence of such dramatists as Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Shaw, Galsworthy, and Mactierlinck, and to the sophisticated Viennese and French comedy and the French drama of social revolt.

Popular interest in the theater was quickened by the visits of companies from the experimental "art" theaters abroad, such as the Abbey Theatre of Dublin; and soon the little-theater movement was represented in the United States by many urban professional groups and by community or regional companies. O'Neill, as the earliest liberator, was the leading experimentalist of the Provincetown group in 1916. By 1925, he had achieved the dominant stature which he retained during the following decade. Each of his plays was a new experiment in form, but his emphasis was always on the psychological analysis and symbolic representation of character. A bit later Maxwell Anderson attained a position second only to that of O'Neill. His many dramas included social comedies, character problem plays and dramas



of social protest, tragedies in classical form, and experiments in the poetic drama. The little theaters developed such regional writers as Paul Green and Lynn Riggs; while the metropolitan theater brought to prominence scores of brilliant new authors and actors and sent an abundance of new plays touring the country in spite of mounting costs and the competition of the motion pictures.

Social and domestic comedy and the character problem play attained especial brilliance in the hands of Rachel Crothers, Barry, Kelly, Kaufman, Connolly, Wilder, Sidney Howard, Behrman, and Sherwood. In the area of social protest and propaganda the name of Elmer Rice was perhaps most prominent, although such others as Odets and Kingsley are well remembered. The element of social protest was also strong in the work of O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Barry, Kaufman, and others.

The energies of the theater noticeably waned during World War II, and since then the combination of high production costs and the competition of mass vehicles of entertainment has prevented recovery, but the recent work of a few writers such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge attests the continuing life of the theater.

#### PRIMITIVISM

In connection with all forms of literature in the present century, the presence in certain authors of Freudian or primitivistic tendencies has been noted. The artist might follow Freud, who emphasized sexual

inhibition as the source of fixations and complexes resulting in neurotic behavior, or he might follow the school of Jung or of another; in any case, if his techniques involved the artistic analysis of psychological motivation, he was here provided with an instrument which he could employ in support of a naturalistic or deterministic interpretation of life. Also, Freudian techniques authorized the use of materials which had been taboo, a use dramatically illustrated by Joyce's *Ulysses*, which reveals the aberrant and violent images present in the stream of consciousness of the central character. O'Neill, Faulkner, and Jeffers are only the three most successful of the many American authors who have employed the analysis of the subconscious for characterization.

Similarly, primitivism, often supported by the premises of Freudian psychology, assumes that basic truths of human behavior are best observed where conditions are least inhibited by refinements or sophistication. The combination of the primitive with the picturesque provides the simple charm of balladry and other folk arts. However, violence is also primitive, and so is the untrammelled manifestation of sex, as these appear in works of London and Frank Norris, Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Jeffers; and it is assumed that refined persons can learn of humanity by observing the inhabitants of Tobacco Road or God's Little Acre. The range of both Freudian and primitivistic analysis is enormous.

## DEPRESSION

The era of the 1920's ended with the Great Depression, following the financial crash of 1929. Paralleling the rise of Hitler and Mussolini abroad, the depression period brought economic distress, ideological unrest, and a general reappraisal of American values. Many writers discovered the depths of their loyalty to traditional American idealism. MacLeish published *New Found Land* (1930) and *Conquistador* (1932), and gave himself for a decade to the writing of democratic propaganda; as the clouds of a second war became ominous, he rallied his fellow authors to recognize "a time to speak" in defense of American ideals. Stephen Vincent Benét wrote *John Brown's Body* (1928); he reaffirmed his American loyalties in *Western Star* (1943); and he composed poems celebrating his early heroes, such as Jefferson and Audubon. Sandburg, who had begun his career with collectivist sympathies, now wrote lovingly of *The People, Yes* (1936) and turned to the completion of his mammoth study of Lincoln.

While many other writers had faith in the remedial processes of American democracy, a great many were impatient. The utopian promise of Marxism and various forms of state collectivism was reflected by such authors as Floyd Dell, Max Eastman, Ezra Pound, Granville Hicks, John Dos Passos, and Richard Wright. Many liberals, such as Dos Passos and Hemingway, were drawn temporarily to the left by sympathy for the loyalists in the Spanish civil

war in 1936. The best writing of Dos Passos is to be found in the books of his Marxist period—from *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) through the novels of the U.S.A. trilogy (1930-1936). Few such writers continued to maintain the Marxist position as it became clear that collectivism inevitably produced dictatorship, totalitarian suppression of the individual, and the inhuman excesses characterizing modern international aggression.

The political and social ideologies of writers have become increasingly influential in this century because democracy has been successful in producing literacy and social fluidity such as have never before been seen on a mammoth scale. By 1950 some twenty per cent of American youth entered college, as compared with two per cent in Great Britain. The remarkable growth of mass media of communication vastly increased the range of the writer's influence, and while such earlier authors as Fitzgerald were harmed by the temptation to write in accordance with the formula of a popular magazine, others have been able without compromise to find readers in the expanding audience for serious literature which has made possible, for example, the publication in 1952 of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* in a magazine committed to mass appeal. The circulation of books between 1925 and 1950 greatly increased, and the book clubs alone, during the prosperity of the 1940's, averaged an annual sale of a hundred million copies. With the growth of reprint publishing and

the broadening potentialities of radio and television, the total opportunities for literature greatly exceed anything previously imagined, and the writer has become increasingly, in this period, a genuine instrument of the whole society.

The half century just concluded must go down in history as the most complex in the annals of modern mankind, and one of the most swiftly kaleidoscopic in its movements. Ideas

and events have been mutually interactive. However the political events of this age may be viewed, the almost miraculous simultaneous appearance, about 1920, of a large number of greatly gifted writers in America produced an illustrious literary epoch. It is the individual power and accomplishments of the greatest of these writers that we have attempted to emphasize in the selections and notes that follow.



# American Revaluations

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EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

(1869-1935)

Among the eight or ten most gifted of his country's poets, Edwin Arlington Robinson is also notable for the scale and versatility of his work, surpassing in this respect any contemporary except Yeats. Yet it is not easy to recall a poem, large or small, that does not illustrate his painstaking zeal for perfection even in the last detail of structure or phrasing. His perfectionism is not mere fussiness, but an intrinsic discipline of form and meaning. Robinson is truly philosophical, profound in thought and expression, and given to probing the subtlest areas of human psychology. He neither expected nor gained a large audience, yet today he towers, with Robert Frost and Eliot for company, above all other American poets since Whitman.

Robinson was descended through his mother from Anne Bradstreet, New England's first colonial poet. He was born at Head Tide, Maine, on December 22, 1869. His father, aged fifty, had just then retired from business, and the family at once moved twelve miles

down the Kennebec, to Gardiner, the "Tilbury Town" of his poems.

The presumed unhappiness of Robinson's boyhood has been exaggerated, but it is true that he had more than the usual handicaps to overcome. Late-born into his family, he was made conscious, as he grew up, of the example of his materially successful brothers in a community where such success was taken for granted. After graduation from high school he spent four difficult years in apparent idleness while reading extensively and laboring steadily at his verse, which editors as steadily declined to publish.

At the age of twenty-two he entered Harvard University, and he remained for two years as a special student, principally of philosophy, literature, and languages. The death of his father in 1893 caused his withdrawal, and inaugurated a period of mental depression. A chronic abscence of his car for several years kept him in pain, and he feared he would lose his mind. The family inheritance was greatly reduced by the panic of 1893.

Both his brothers, who had begun so brilliantly, proved unstable and then died within a few years, while his mother went into a long and harrowing illness. Just before his mother's death, the serious love affair of his youth was terminated in sorrow. Thereafter he shyly avoided such entanglements; in any case not until he was fifty could he have married on his income as a poet.

His mother's death relieved him of family responsibility. In 1896 he settled in New York, and unable to find a publisher, he had *The Torrent and the Night Before* printed at his own expense. The February, 1897, *Bookman* observed that his verse had the "true fire," but that "the world is not beautiful to him, but a prison house." Robinson's letter of reply, in the March number, contained a now-famous appraisal of his view of life. "The world is not a 'prison house,'" he said, "but a kind of spiritual kindergarten where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell 'God' with the wrong blocks." The next year he included most of these poems in his second volume, *The Children of the Night* (1897), again defraying the costs of publication. These volumes ushered into the world such "bewildered infants," now famous, as Aaron Stark, with "eyes like little dollars," and Richard Cory, for whom a bullet was medicine, and Luke Havergal, caught in the web of fate.

After a year in New York he accepted an appointment at Harvard as office secretary to the president, but proved wholly un-

fit for such routine. Back in New York, while not gregarious, he was far from being such a recluse as is often imagined. According to Fullerton Waldo, he loved the bustling life of the streets as "Charles Lamb loved the tidal fullness along the Strand." For years he lived in Greenwich Village, in the then Bohemian area near Washington Square. There he had as intimates such writers and staunch friends as Josephine Preston Peabody and William Vaughn Moody, whom he had known at Harvard, and E. C. Stedman, Percy Mackaye, Hermann Hagedorn, Ridgely Torrence, and Daniel Gregory Mason, the composer, who taught music at Columbia. When *Captain Craig* finally secured a publisher in 1902, the poet was for a time spared the knowledge that it had been subsidized, secretly, by Gardiner friends. The revelation of this, together with the small sale of the volume, increased his desperation during 1903-1904, when he worked as a subway-construction inspector. Creative work under these circumstances was nearly impossible.

In March of 1905, he received his first check in ten years for writing accepted by a magazine, and within a week there arrived a letter from the President of the United States. Kermit Roosevelt, whose master at Groton was a Gardiner friend of the poet's, had sent his father a copy of *The Children of the Night*, which the President had much admired. Now, learning of the poet's plight, he had him appointed to a clerkship in the United States

Custom House at New York. The salary was small, but Robinson had once again the time and energy for poetry. By the end of Roosevelt's term he had prepared the volume *The Town Down the River* (1910), and the President's influence had secured its publication by Scribner's.

Although it is reported that for years this notable poet depended in part upon the unobtrusive benefactions of his admirers, he was never again forced to waste his limited strength to obtain mere subsistence. A studio was provided for him in New York. After 1911 he spent many summers at the MacDowell Colony at Peterborough, New Hampshire, a retreat for artists, established in memory of Edward MacDowell. There, through succeeding summers, he completed the longer works of his second period.

In the Arthurian poems, each the size of a separate volume, Robinson developed a highly individualized blank verse, lofty in character yet modern in its speech rhythms, equally adaptable for sustained narrative, dialogue, and dramatic effects, and for the poet's characteristic discussion of ideas. His wit, unsurpassed among modern writers, is nowhere seen to better advantage than in his long narratives. It is not dependent upon what is comic in the ordinary sense, but springs from the recognition of essential incongruities at the core of reality, and rewards only those who can follow the poet's fundamental thinking. The Arthurian poems are faithful to the sources—Malory and such continental chroniclers as Wolfram

—but the characters have been reinterpreted in modern terms. The world of Arthur, in chaos as a result of the greed and faithlessness of its leadership, corresponded, it seemed to Robinson, to the condition of things at the time of the first World War. *Merlin* appeared in 1917, *Lancelot* in 1920, and *Tristram* in 1927.

The poet's financial rewards increased very slowly, but his first *Collected Poems* (1921) was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, and so was *The Man Who Died Twice* (1924), a major narrative of fantastic design but great power and moral significance, on the theme of regeneration. *Tristram* also won the Pulitzer Prize, and as a selection of the Literary Guild, a book club, it gave the poet his first large sale. During the remaining nine years of his life, Robinson's financial worries were ended.

In his last years Robinson created several long narratives of modern life, beginning with *Cavender's House* (1929). These are psychological studies of character, all dealing, in various lights, with the nature of human guilt or fidelity, with the destructiveness of the desire for power or for possession. *The Glory of the Nightingales* (1930) and *Matthias at the Door* (1931) are the climax of Robinson's criticism of modern life, and subtly incorporate the constant symbols of light, darkness, regeneration, and responsibility that prevail in his poetry from the beginning and reach their highest tragic synthesis in *Tristram. Talifer* (1933) is a social comedy of subtlety and

brilliant wit, in a vein of meaningful worldliness. *King Jasper* (1935), although it shows traces of the fatigue of a dying man, is a cleverly managed allegory, and is interesting as revealing the final phase of the poet's developing concept of patrician responsibility in democratic leadership. After recurrent illnesses Robinson died in 1935, his sixty-sixth year.

The standard edition is *Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1921; enlarged editions appeared periodically through 1937. Collections of let-

ters are *Selected Letters*, compiled by Ridgely Torrence, 1940; and *Untriangulated Stars: Letters of Edwin Arlington Robinson to Harry de Forest Smith, 1890-1905*, edited by Denham Sutcliffe, 1947. Standard biographies were published by Hermann Hagedorn, 1938; and Emory Neff, 1948.

Memoirs and critical studies are Lloyd Morris, *The Poetry of Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1923; Mark Van Doren, *Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1927; L. M. Beebe, *Edwin Arlington Robinson and the Arthurian Legend*, 1927; Charles Cestre, *An Introduction to Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1930; R. W. Brown, *Next Door to a Poet*, 1937; E. Kaplan, *Philosophy in the Poetry of Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1940; Yvor Winters, *Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1946; and Edwin G. Fussell, *Edwin Arlington Robinson*, 1954.

## Luke Havergal

Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal,  
There where the vines cling crimson on the wall,  
And in the twilight wait for what will come.  
The leaves will whisper there of her, and some,  
Like flying words, will strike you as they fall; 5  
But go, and if you listen she will call.  
Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal—  
Luke Havergal.

No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies  
To rift the fiery night that's in your eyes; 10  
But there, where western glooms are gathering,  
The dark will end the dark, if anything:  
God slays Himself with every leaf that flies,  
And hell is more than half of paradise.  
No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies— 15  
In eastern skies.

Out of a grave I come to tell you this,  
Out of a grave I come to quench the kiss  
That flames upon your forehead with a glow  
That blinds you to the way that you must go. 20  
Yes, there is yet one way to where she is,  
Bitter, but one that faith may never miss.  
Out of a grave I come to tell you this—  
To tell you this.

There is the western gate, Luke Havergal, 25  
There are the crimson leaves upon the wall.

Go, for the winds are tearing them away,—  
 Nor think to riddle the dead words they say,  
 Nor any more to feel them as they fall;  
 But go, and if you trust her she will call.  
 There is the western gate, Luke Havergal—  
 Luke Havergal.

30

1896

### Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
 We people on the pavement looked at him:  
 He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
 Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
 And he was always human when he talked;  
 But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
 'Good-morning,' and he glittered when he walked.

5

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—  
 And admirably schooled in every grace:  
 In fine, we thought that he was everything  
 'To make us wish that we were in his place.

10

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
 And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
 And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
 Went home and put a bullet through his head.

15

1897

### Miniver Cheevy

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,  
 Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;  
 He wept that he was ever born,  
 And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old  
 When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;  
 The vision of a warrior bold  
 Would set him dancing.

5

Miniver sighed for what was not,  
 And dreamed, and rested from his labors;

10



He dreamed of Thebes<sup>1</sup> and Camelot,<sup>2</sup>  
And Priam's<sup>3</sup> neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown  
That made so many a name so fragrant;  
He mourned Romance, now on the town, 15  
And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,<sup>4</sup>  
Albeit he had never seen one;  
He would have sinned incessantly  
Could he have been one. 20

Miniver cursed the commonplace  
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;  
He missed the medieval grace  
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought, 25  
But sore annoyed was he without it;  
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,  
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,  
Scratched his head and kept on thinking; 30  
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,  
And kept on drinking.

1910

## Leonora

They have made for Leonora this low dwelling in the ground,  
And with cedar they have woven the four walls round.  
Like a little dryad hiding she'll be wrapped all in green,  
Better kept and longer valued than by ways that would have been.

They will come with many roses in the early afternoon, 5  
They will come with pinks and lilies and with Leonora soon;  
And as long as beauty's garments over beauty's limbs are thrown,  
There'll be lilies that are liars, and the rose will have its own.

There will be a wondrous quiet in the house that they have made,  
And to-night will be a darkness in the place where she'll be laid; 10

1. Ancient Greek city, prominent in Greek history and legend.

2. Legendary site of King Arthur's court in the Arthurian romances.

3. King of Troy and the father of the

heroes Paris and Hector.

4. Renaissance merchant-princes, rulers of Florence for nearly two centuries, noted equally for their cruelties and for their benefactions to learning and art.

But the builders, looking forward into time, could only see  
Darker nights for Leonora than to-night shall ever be.

1910

## Bewick Finzer

Time was when his half million drew  
The breath of six per cent;  
But soon the worm of what-was-not  
Fed hard on his content;  
And something crumbled in his brain 5  
When his half million went.

Time passed, and filled along with his  
The place of many more;  
Time came, and hardly one of us  
Had credence to restore, 10  
From what appeared one day, the man  
Whom we had known before.

The broken voice, the withered neck,  
The coat worn out with care,  
The cleanliness of indigence, 15  
The brilliance of despair,  
The fond imponderable dreams  
Of affluence,—all were there.

Poor Finzer, with his dreams and schemes,  
Fares hard now in the race, 20  
With heart and eye that have a task  
When he looks in the face  
Of one who might so easily  
Have been in Finzer's place.

He comes unfailing for the loan 25  
We give and then forget;  
He comes, and probably for years  
Will he be coming yet,—  
Familiar as an old mistake,  
And futile as regret. 30

1916

Cassandra<sup>5</sup>

I heard one who said: "Verily,  
 What word have I for children here?  
 Your Dollar is your only Word,<sup>6</sup>  
 The wrath of it your only fear.

"You build it altars tall enough 5  
 To make you see, but you are blind;  
 You cannot leave it long enough  
 To look before you or behind.

"When Reason beckons you to pause,  
 You laugh and say that you know best; 10  
 But what it is you know, you keep  
 As dark as ingots in a chest.

"You laugh and answer, 'We are young;  
 O leave us now, and let us grow.'—  
 Not asking how much more of this 15  
 Will Time endure or Fate bestow.

"Because a few complacent years  
 Have made your peril of your pride,  
 Think you that you are to go on  
 Forever pampered and untried? 20

"What lost eclipse of history,  
 What bivouac of the marching stars,  
 Has given the sign for you to see  
 Millenniums and last great wars?

"What unrecorded overthrow 25  
 Of all the world has ever known,  
 Or ever been, has made itself  
 So plain to you, and you alone?

"Your Dollar, Dove and Eagle make  
 A Trinity that even you 30  
 Rate higher than you rate yourselves;  
 It pays, it flatters, and it's new.<sup>7</sup>

5. In the *Iliad*, Cassandra, daughter of King Priam, was enabled to prophesy by Apollo; when she refused to submit to his desires, he ordained that no one should believe her prophecies.  
 6. Cf. "Word," in John i: 1; and see the recurrence of "Dollar" as part of

the unholy Trinity, in ll. 29-30.

7. Specifically, Robinson opposed "dollar diplomacy," the policy of protection for American investments in Latin America, which Wilson (1913) inherited.

"And though your very flesh and blood  
Be what your Eagle eats and drinks,

You'll praise him for the best of birds, 35  
Not knowing what the Eagle thinks.

"The power is yours, but not the sight;  
You see not upon what you tread;  
You have the ages for your guide,  
But not the wisdom to be led. 40

"Think you to tread forever down  
The merciless old verities?  
And are you never to have eyes  
To see the world for what it is?

"Are you to pay for what you have 45  
With all you are?"—No other word  
We caught, but with a laughing crowd  
Moved on. None heeded, and few heard.

1916

## Old King Cole

In Tilbury Town did Old King Cole  
A wise old age anticipate,  
Desiring, with his pipe and bowl,  
No Khan's extravagant estate.  
No crown annoyed his honest head, 5  
No fiddlers three were called or needed;  
For two disastrous heirs instead  
Made music more than ever three did.

Bereft of her with whom his life  
Was harmony without a flaw, 10  
He took no other for a wife,  
Nor sighed for any that he saw;  
And if he doubted his two sons,  
And heirs, Alexis and Evander,  
He might have been as doubtful once 15  
Of Robert Burns and Alexander.

Alexis, in his early youth,  
Began to steal—from old and young.  
Likewise Evander, and the truth  
Was like a bad taste on his tongue. 20  
Born thieves and liars, their affair  
Seemed only to be tarred with evil—

The most insufferable pair  
Of scamps that ever cheered the devil.

The world went on, their fame went on, 25  
And they went on—from bad to worse;  
Till, goaded hot with nothing done,  
And each accoutred with a curse,  
The friends of Old King Cole, by twos,  
And fours, and sevens, and elevens, 30  
Pronounced unalterable views  
Of doings that were not of heaven's.

And having learned again whereby  
Their baleful zeal had come about,  
King Cole met many a wrathful eye 35  
So kindly that its wrath went out—  
Or partly out. Say what they would,  
He seemed the more to court their candor;  
But never told what kind of good  
Was in Alexis and Evander. 40

And Old King Cole, with many a puff  
That haloed his urbanity,  
Would smoke till he had smoked enough,  
And listen most attentively.  
He beamed as with an inward light 45  
That had the Lord's assurance in it;  
And once a man was there all night,  
Expecting something every minute.

But whether from too little thought,  
Or too much fealty to the bowl, 50  
A dim reward was all he got  
For sitting up with Old King Cole.  
"Though mine," the father mused aloud,  
"Are not the sons I would have chosen,  
Shall I, less evilly endowed, 55  
By their infirmity be frozen?"

"They'll have a bad end, I'll agree,  
But I was never born to groan;  
For I can see what I can see,  
And I'm accordingly alone. 60  
With open heart and open door,  
I love my friends, I like my neighbors;  
But if I try to tell you more,  
Your doubts will overmatch my labors.

"This pipe would never make me calm,  
 This bowl my grief would never drown. 65  
 For grief like mine there is no balm  
 In Gilead,<sup>8</sup> or in Tilbury Town.  
 And if I see what I can see,  
 I know not any way to blind it; 70  
 Nor more if any way may be  
 For you to grope or fly to find it.  
 "There may be room for ruin yet,  
 And ashes for a wasted love;  
 Or, like One whom you may forget, 75  
 I may have meat you know not of.<sup>9</sup>  
 And if I'd rather live than weep  
 Meanwhile, do you find that surprising?  
 Why, bless my soul, the man's asleep!  
 'That's good. The sun will soon be rising.' 80

1916

### Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford<sup>1</sup>

You are a friend then, as I make it out,  
 Of our man Shakespeare, who alone of us  
 Will put an ass's head in Fairyland<sup>2</sup>  
 As he would add a shilling to more shillings,  
 All most harmonious,—and out of his 5  
 Miraculous inviolable increase  
 Fills Ilion,<sup>3</sup> Rome, or any town you like  
 Of olden time with timeless Englishmen;  
 And I must wonder what you think of him—  
 All you down there where your small Avon flows 10

8. Cf. Jeremiah viii: 22.

9. Cf. John iv: 32. With these words Jesus answered his disciples' invitation to eat, having just converted the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well.

1. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born and reared at Stratford-on-Avon, where, at about the age of twenty-one, he left his family when he went to seek his fortune in the London theater. Ben Jonson (1573-1637) was Shakespeare's closest rival among contemporary dramatists. A classicist, scholar, and brilliant London wit, Jonson declared his love and admiration for Shakespeare, but was puzzled because his friend, after achieving the triumph of sheer genius in the great world, still had the provincial's desire to shine in little Stratford. The imaginary episode

of this poem occurs in 1609. Shakespeare, then forty-five, had completed his greatest tragedies. Various interpretations of Shakespeare might be based on his works, and in the same way Robinson's portrayal is evidently also a self-portrait to some degree. He published the poem in *Drama*, in November, 1915, on the eve of the international Shakespeare Tercentenary, and collected it during the centennial year in *The Man Against the Sky* (1916).

2. See *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Act III, Scene 1, ll. 79-206, in which the loutish Bottom, his head transformed by Puck's prank to that of an ass, makes love to Titania, queen of fairyland.

3. Also sometimes "Ilium"; the Greek name for Troy.

By Stratford, and where you're an Alderman.  
 Some, for a guess, would have him riding back  
 To be a farrier<sup>4</sup> there, or say a dyer;  
 Or maybe one of your adept surveyors;  
 Or like enough the wizard of all tanners. 15  
 Not you—no fear of that; for I discern  
 In you a kindling of the flame that saves—  
 The nimble element, the true phlogiston;<sup>5</sup>  
 I see it, and was told of it, moreover,  
 By our discriminate friend himself, no other. 20  
 Had you been one of the sad average,  
 As he would have it,—meaning, as I take it,  
 The sinew and the solvent of our Island,  
 You'd not be buying beer for this Terpander's<sup>6</sup>  
 Approved and estimated friend Ben Jonson; 25  
 He'd never foist it as a part of his  
 Contingent entertainment of a townsman  
 While he goes off rehearsing, as he must,  
 If he shall ever be the Duke of Stratford.<sup>7</sup>  
 And my words are no shadow on your town— 30  
 Far from it; for one town's like another  
 As all are unlike London. Oh, he knows it,—  
 And there's the Stratford in him; he denies it,  
 And there's the Shakespeare in him. So, God help him!  
 I tell him he needs Greek;<sup>8</sup> but neither God 35  
 Nor Greek will help him. Nothing will help that man.  
 You see the fates have given him so much,  
 He must have all or perish,—or look out  
 Of London, where he sees too many lords.  
 They're part of half what ails him: I suppose 40  
 There's nothing fouler down among the demons  
 Than what it is he feels when he remembers  
 The dust and sweat and ointment of his calling  
 With his lords looking on and laughing at him.  
 King as he is, he can't be king *de facto*,<sup>9</sup> 45  
 And that's as well, because he wouldn't like it;  
 He'd frame a lower rating of men then

4. A blacksmith.

5. A hypothetical substance or chemical which early science supposed to be the imperceptible agent responsible for combustion; hence, the "nimble element."

6. *I.e.*, Shakespeare's Terpander (*fl. ca.* 700 B.C.), a Greek poet born on the isle of Lesbos, was regarded as the father of Greek music and lyric poetry.

7. Jonson's ironic comment on Shakespeare's desire to become the great

citizen of his native Stratford, recalling that in 1596 he had secured the grant of a heraldic coat of arms to his father and his descendants. *Cf.* I. 140.

8. Jonson's opinion that Shakespeare "had small Latin and less Greek" is familiar; however, John Aubrey, less scholarly but college bred, thought him adequate in this respect.

9. In reality.

Than he has now; and after that would come  
 An abdication or an apoplexy.  
 He can't be king, not even king of Stratford,— 50  
 Though half the world, if not the whole of it,  
 May crown him with a crown that fits no king  
 Save Lord Apollo's homesick emissary:<sup>1</sup>  
 Not there on Avon, or on any stream  
 Where Naiads<sup>2</sup> and their white arms are no more, 55  
 Shall he find home again. It's all too bad.  
 But there's a comfort, for he'll have that House—<sup>3</sup>  
 The best you ever saw; and he'll be there  
 Anon, as you're an Alderman. Good God!  
 He makes me lie awake o' nights and laugh. 60  
  
 And you have known him from his origin,  
 You tell me; and a most uncommon urchin  
 He must have been to the few seeing ones—  
 A trifle terrifying, I dare say,  
 Discovering a world with his man's eyes, 65  
 Quite as another lad might see some finches,  
 If he looked hard and had an eye for nature.  
 But this one had his eyes and their foretelling,  
 And he had you to fare with, and what else?  
 He must have had a father and a mother— 70  
 In fact I've heard him say so—and a dog,  
 As a boy should, I venture; and the dog,  
 Most likely, was the only man who knew him.  
 A dog, for all I know, is what he needs  
 As much as anything right here today, 75  
 To counsel him about his disillusion,  
 Old aches, and parturitions of what's coming,—  
 A dog of orders,<sup>4</sup> an emeritus,  
 To wag his tail at him when he comes home,  
 And then to put his paws up on his knees 80  
 And say, "For God's sake, what's it all about?"  
  
 I don't know whether he needs a dog or not—  
 Or what he needs. I tell him he needs Greek;  
 I'll talk of rules and Aristotle<sup>5</sup> with him,

1. Greek mythology credited Apollo with the invention and patronage of the arts of music and poetry; hence Shakespeare is his "homesick emissary."

2. Naiads were the female Greek divinities of fresh-water streams and lakes; they inspired the poets and seers who drank of their waters, but they had departed from the Avon (*cf.* l. 54).

3. In 1597 Shakespeare had purchased New Place, then probably the largest

and most impressive house in Stratford. 4. Of high rank by appointment, as in knighthood, or in ecclesiastical or military organizations; here "emeritus," or confirmed in perpetuity for special merit.

5. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), in his *Poetics*, formulated the principle of unity of action in dramatic structure; later critics interpreted his remarks to include also the unities of time and place (*cf.* l. 88).



And if his tonguc's at home he'll say to that, 85  
"I have your word that Aristotle knows,  
And you mine that I don't know Aristotle."  
He's all at odds with all the unities,  
And what's yet worse, it doesn't seem to matter;  
He treads along through Time's old wilderness 90  
As if the tramp of all the centuries  
Had left no roads—and there are none, for him;  
He doesn't see them, even with those eyes,—  
And that's a pity, or I say it is.  
Accordingly we have him as we have him— 95  
Going his way, the way that he goes best,  
A pleasant animal with no great noise  
Or nonsense anywhere to set him off—  
Save only divers and inclement devils  
Have made of late his heart their dwelling place. 100  
A flame half ready to fly out sometimes  
At some annoyance may be fanned up in him,  
But soon it falls, and when it falls goes out;  
He knows how little room there is in there  
For crude and futile animosities, 105  
And how much for the joy of being whole,  
And how much for long sorrow and old pain.  
On our side there are some who may be given  
To grow old wondering what he thinks of us  
And some above us, who are, in his eyes, 110  
Above himself,—and that's quite right and English.  
Yet here we smile, or disappoint the gods  
Who made it so: the gods have always eyes  
To see men scratch; and they see one down here  
Who itches, manor-bitten to the bone," 115  
Albeit he knows himself—yes, yes, he knows—  
The lord of more than England and of more  
Than all the seas of England in all time  
Shall ever wash. D'ye wonder that I laugh?  
He sees me, and he doesn't seem to care; 120  
And why the devil should he? I can't tell you.  
  
I'll meet him out alone of a bright Sunday,  
Trim, rather spruce, and quite the gentleman.  
"What ho, my lord!" say I. He doesn't hear me;  
Wherefore I have to pause and look at him. 125  
He's not enormous, but one looks at him.

6. *I.e.*, the Stratford manor house is for Jonson the symbol of Shakespeare's desire for worldly success in general. *Cf.*

l. 29 and l. 140, in which he refers to Shakespeare's "dukedom."

A little on the round if you insist,  
 For now, God save the mark, he's growing old;  
 He's five and forty,<sup>7</sup> and to hear him talk  
 These days you'd call him eighty; then you'd add 130  
 More years to that. He's old enough to be  
 The father of a world, and so he is.<sup>8</sup>  
 "Ben, you're a scholar, what's the time of day?"  
 Says he; and there shines out of him again  
 An aged light that has no age or station— 135  
 The mystery that's his—a mischievous  
 Half-mad serenity that laughs at fame  
 For being won so easy, and at friends  
 Who laugh at him for what he wants the most,  
 And for his dukedom down in Warwickshire;— 140  
 By which you see we're all a little jealous. . . .  
 Poor Greene!<sup>9</sup> I fear the color of his name  
 Was even as that of his ascending soul;  
 And he was one where there are many others,—  
 Some scrivening to the end against their fate, 145  
 Their puppets all in ink and all to die there;  
 And some with hands that once would shade an eye  
 That scanned Euripides and Aeschylus<sup>1</sup>  
 Will reach by this time for a pot-house mop  
 To slush their first and last of royalties. 150  
 Poor devils! and they all play to his hand;  
 For so it was in Athens and old Rome.  
 But that's not here or there; I've wandered off.  
 Greene does it, or I'm careful. Where's that boy?  
 Yes, he'll go back to Stratford. And we'll miss him? 155  
 Dear sir, there'll be no London here without him.  
 We'll all be riding, one of these fine days,  
 Down there to see him—and his wife won't like us;<sup>2</sup>  
 And then we'll think of what he never said  
 Of women—which, if taken all in all 160

7. Shakespeare was born on April 23 (?), 1564; since he is now "five and forty," the date is 1609.

8. In his dedicatory poem for the first folio edition (1623) of Shakespeare's plays, Jonson wrote that his departed friend was "not of an age, but for all time."

9. Robert Greene (1560?-1592), a minor writer whose work Jonson regarded as mere "scrivening" (cf. l. 145). In his *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) Greene made a veiled allusion to Shakespeare as "an upstart crow \* \* \* in

his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey."

1. Euripides and Aeschylus, great Greek poet-dramatists who flourished early in the fifth century B.C., furnished the standard of dramatic excellence for such classicists as Jonson.

2. In the next year, 1610, Shakespeare moved permanently to New Place, Stratford, where his wife had lived for thirteen years. That Shakespeare's marriage was unhappy, as suggested here by Jonson's speech, is a traditional assumption based on circumstantial evidence.

With what he did say, would buy many horses.<sup>3</sup>  
 Though nowadays he's not so much for women:  
 "So few of them," he says, "are worth the guessing."  
 But there's a worm at work when he says that,  
 And while he says it one feels in the air 165  
 A deal of circumambient hocus-pocus.  
 They've had him dancing till his toes were tender,  
 And he can feel 'em now, come chilly rains.  
 There's no long cry for going into it,  
 However, and we don't know much about it. 170  
 The Fitton<sup>4</sup> thing was worst of all, I fancy;  
 And you in Stratford, like most here in London,  
 Have more now in the *Sonnets*<sup>5</sup> than you paid for;  
 He's put one there with all her poison on,  
 To make a singing fiction of a shadow 175  
 That's in his life a fact, and always will be.  
 But she's no care of ours, though Time, I fear,  
 Will have a more reverberant ado  
 About her than about another one  
 Who seems to have decoyed him, married him, 180  
 And sent him scuttling on his way to London,—  
 With much already learned, and more to learn,<sup>6</sup>  
 And more to follow. Lord! how I see him now,  
 Pretending, maybe trying, to be like us.  
 Whatever he may have meant, we never had him; 185  
 He failed us, or escaped, or what you will,—  
 And there was that about him (God knows what,—  
 We'd flayed another had he tried it on us)  
 That made as many of us as had wits  
 More fond of all his easy distances 190  
 Than one another's noise and clap-your-shoulder.  
 But think you not, my friend, he'd never talk!  
 Talk? He was eldritch<sup>7</sup> at it; and we listened—  
 Thereby acquiring much we knew before  
 About ourselves, and hitherto had held 195  
 Irrelevant, or not prime to the purpose.

3. Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act I, Scene 1, l. 142, in which Benedick says to Beatrice, "I would my horse had the speed of your tongue."

4. Mary Fitton, a lady in waiting to Queen Elizabeth, was only sixteen when Shakespeare met her. It has been suggested that she was the "dark lady" of the sonnets, and served as the poet's model for Cleopatra; but evidence in support of these assumptions is lacking.

5. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (1609) had

just been published. Their record of the unhappy love of an aging poet for a much younger woman may be autobiographical.

6. I.e., Anne Hathaway. Whether she "decoyed him" into marriage or not, it is established that she was twenty-six and he only eighteen when they were married in 1582, and their first child, Susanna, was born six months later. Cf. l. 158.

7. Supernaturally gifted, uncanny.

And there were some, of course, and there be now,  
 Disordered and reduced amazedly  
 To resignation by the mystic seal  
 Of young finality the gods had laid 200  
 On everything that made him a young demon;  
 And one or two shot looks at him already  
 As he had been their executioner;  
 And once or twice he was, not knowing it,—  
 Or knowing, being sorry for poor clay 205  
 And saying nothing. . . . Yet, for all his engines,<sup>8</sup>  
 You'll meet a thousand of an afternoon  
 Who strut and sun themselves and see around 'em  
 A world made out of more that has a reason  
 Than his, I swear, that he sees here today; 210  
 'Though he may scarcely give a fool an exit"  
 But we mark how he sees in everything  
 A law that, given we flout it once too often,  
 Brings fire and iron down on our naked heads.  
 'To me it looks as if the power that made him, 215  
 For fear of giving all things to one creature,  
 Left out the first,—faith, innocence, illusion,  
 Whatever 'tis that keeps us out o' Bedlam,<sup>1</sup>—  
 And thereby, for his too consuming vision,  
 Empowered him out of nature; though to see him, 220  
 You'd never guess what's going on inside him.  
 He'll break out some day like a keg of ale  
 With too much independent frenzy in it;  
 And all for cellaring<sup>2</sup> what he knows won't keep,  
 And what he'd best forget—but that he can't. 225  
 You'll have it, and have more than I'm foretelling;  
 And there'll be such a roaring at the Globe<sup>3</sup>  
 As never stunned the bleeding gladiators.  
 He'll have to change the color of its hair  
 A bit, for now he calls it Cleopatra. 230  
 Black hair would never do for Cleopatra.<sup>4</sup>

8. In the archaic sense, "inventions" or "contrivances"; the word was then employed to designate devices of stage production.

9. The Fool, or clown, was usually a conventional instrument of comic relief; Jonson suggests that Shakespeare made him a significant agent. Cf. Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice* and the gravediggers in *Hamlet*.

1. The colloquial pronunciation of "Bethlehem," here denoting a London asylum for the insane, St. Mary of

Bethlehem.

2. The preservation of spirituous beverages, as in a wine cellar.

3. Shakespeare had become part owner of the Globe theater in 1599.

4. It is probable that Shakespeare had just completed the composition of *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1608. Mary Fitton (cf. l. 171), whom Jonson apparently thinks to be the model for Cleopatra, was noted for her black hair and eyes.

But you and I are not yet two old women,  
 And you're a man of office.<sup>5</sup> What he does  
 Is more to you than how it is he does it,—  
 And that's what the Lord God has never told him. 235  
 They work together, and the Devil helps 'em;  
 They do it of a morning, or if not,  
 They do it of a night; in which event  
 He's peevish of a morning. He seems old;  
 He's not the proper stomach<sup>6</sup> or the sleep— 240  
 And they're two sovran<sup>7</sup> agents to conserve him  
 Against the fiery art that has no mercy  
 But what's in that prodigious grand new House.  
 I gather something happening in his boyhood  
 Fulfilled him with a boy's determination 245  
 To make all Stratford 'ware of him.<sup>8</sup> Well, well,  
 I hope at last he'll have his joy of it,  
 And all his pigs and sheep and bellowing beeves,  
 And frogs and owls and unicorns,<sup>9</sup> moreover,  
 Be less than hell to his attendant cars. 250  
 Oh, past a doubt we'll go down to see him.

He may be wise. With London two days off,  
 Down there some wind of heaven may yet revive him;  
 But there's no quickening breath from anywhere  
 Shall make of him again the poised young faun 255  
 From Warwickshire, who'd made, it seems, already  
 A legend of himself before I came!  
 To blink before the last of his first lightning.  
 Whatever there be, there'll be no more of that;  
 The coming on of his old monster Time<sup>2</sup> 260  
 Has made him a still man; and he has dreams

5. *I.e.*, an officeholder; hence, a man of the world.

6. Appetite; *i.e.*, inclination or self-confidence.

7. Sovereign, powerful.

8. This view is supported by Shakespeare's humble origin and educational handicaps, his unplanned and probably unhappy marriage, and the lack of success which caused him to leave his family in Stratford about 1585 when threatened with arrest on the charge of poaching.

9. The animals of the Stratford farm and countryside are here associated with the imaginary unicorn, an artificial creature of heraldry (*cf.* "his dukedom," l. 140).

1. Jonson was nine years younger than Shakespeare. The latter was well estab-

lished in 1598, when he appeared in Jonson's first successful comedy, *Every Man in His Humour*. Shakespeare had by then created at least fourteen plays, including such great works as *Roméo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. In their continuous friendship Jonson remained the debtor: Shakespeare also acted in Jonson's first tragedy, *Sejanus* (1603).

2. More than a quarter of the allusions to "Time" listed in one of the standard dictionaries of quotations are by Shakespeare; they refer characteristically to the ravages of "the tooth of Time," and to the "bald Sexton" who conducts our "petty pace" through the "ages" of man toward "the last syllable" of "mere oblivion."

Were fair to think on once, and all found hollow.  
 He knows how much of what men paint themselves  
 Would blister in the light of what they are;  
 He sees how much of what was great now shares 265  
 An eminence transformed and ordinary;  
 He knows too much of what the world has hushed  
 In others, to be loud now for himself;  
 He knows now at what height low enemies  
 May reach his heart, and high friends let him fall; 270  
 But what not even such as he may know  
 Bedevils him the worst: his lark may sing  
 At heaven's gate<sup>3</sup> how he will, and for as long  
 As joy may listen, but *he* sees no gate,  
 Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little 275  
 Before the churchyard has it, and the worm.<sup>4</sup>  
 Not long ago, late in an afternoon,  
 I came on him unseen down Lambeth<sup>5</sup> way,  
 And on my life I was afear'd of him:  
 He gloomed and mumbled like a soul from Tophet,<sup>6</sup> 280  
 His hands behind him and his head bent solemn.  
 "What is it now," said I,—“another woman?”  
 That made him sorry for me, and he smiled.  
 “No, Ben,” he mused; “it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.”<sup>7</sup>  
 We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done. 285  
 Spiders and flies—we're mostly one or t'other—  
 We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done.”  
 “By God, you sing that song as if you knew it!”  
 Said I, by way of cheering him; “what ails ye?”  
 “I think I must have come down here to think,” 290  
 Says he to that, and pulls his little beard;  
 “Your fly will serve as well as anybody,  
 And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,  
 And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;  
 And then your spider gets him in her net, 295  
 And eats him out, and hangs him up to dry.  
 That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.  
 And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom,  
 And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.”<sup>8</sup>

3. A then current play by Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* (1609), contained the line “Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings” (Act II, Scene 3, l. 21).

4. For instances of similar language in Shakespeare, see *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 3, ll. 21–29, and Act V, Scene 1, ll. 83–101.

5. Lambeth Palace with its garden forms the seat in London of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

6. In Hebrew prophecy a place where children were sacrificed to the fire of Moloch, hence often synonymous with Hell, or chaos (*c.f.* Isaiah xxx: 33; Jeremiah vii: 31).

7. Compare ll. 284–305 with *Macbeth*, Act V, Scene 5, ll. 19–28.

8. *Cf.* *King Lear*, Act IV, Scene 1, ll. 36–37: “As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; / They kill us for their sport.”

It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing. 300  
 It's all a world where bugs and emperors  
 Go singularly back to the same dust,  
 Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars  
 That sang together, Ben, will sing the same  
 Old stave tomorrow."

When he talks like that, 305  
 There's nothing for a human man to do  
 But lead him to some grateful nook like this  
 Where we be now, and there to make him drink.  
 He'll drink, for love of me, and then be sick;  
 A sad sign always in a man of parts, 310  
 And always very ominous. The great  
 Should be as large in liquor as in love,—  
 And our great friend is not so large in either:  
 One disaffects him, and the other fails him;  
 Whatso he drinks that has an antic in it, 315  
 He's wondering what's to pay in his insides;  
 And while his eyes are on the Cyprian<sup>9</sup>  
 He's fribbling all the time with that damned House.  
 We laugh here at his thrift, but after all  
 It may be thrift that saves him from the devil; 320  
 God gave it, anyhow,—and we'll suppose  
 He knew the compound of his handiwork.  
 Today the clouds are with him, but anon  
 He'll out of 'em enough to shake the tree  
 Of life itself and bring down fruit unheard-of,— 325  
 And, throwing in the bruised and whole together,  
 Prepare a wine to make us drunk with wonder;  
 And if he live, there'll be a sunset spell  
 Thrown over him as over a glassed lake  
 That yesterday was all a black wild water.<sup>1</sup> 330

God send he live to give us, if no more,  
 What now's a-rampage in him, and exhibit,  
 With a decent half-allegiance to the ages  
 An earnest of at least a casual eye  
 Turned once on what he owes to Gutenberg,<sup>2</sup> 335  
 And to the faculty of more centuries

9. A double meaning is suggested: the word designates a much-esteemed wine from the Greek island of Cyprus; but "the Cyprian" is also a name for the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, whose legendary birthplace was Cyprus, where her worship flourished.

1. After completing his greatest tragedies at about this time, Shakespeare en-

tered this period of "sunset spell" and produced the three romantic fantasies—*Cymbeline*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

2. I.e., to printing; the German Johann Gutenberg (1400?–1468) invented the modern art of printing from movable type.

Than are as yet a picture in our vision.  
 "There's time enough,—I'll do it when I'm old,  
 And we're immortal men," he says to that;  
 And then he says to me, "Ben, what's 'immortal'? 340  
 Think you by any force of ordination  
 It may be nothing of a sort more noisy  
 Than a small oblivion of component ashes  
 That of a dream-addicted world was once  
 A moving atomy much like your friend here?"<sup>3</sup> 345  
 Nothing will help that man. To make him laugh,  
 I said then he was a mad mountebank,<sup>4</sup>—  
 And by the Lord I nearer made him cry.  
 I could have eat an eft<sup>5</sup> then, on my knees,  
 Tail, claws, and all of him; for I had stung 350  
 The king of men, who had no sting for me,  
 And I had hurt him in his memories;  
 And I say now, as I shall say again,  
 I love the man this side idolatry.<sup>6</sup>

He'll do it when he's old, he says. I wonder. 355  
 He may not be so ancient as all that.  
 For such as he, the thing that is to do  
 Will do itself,—but there's a reckoning;  
 The sessions<sup>7</sup> that are now too much his own,  
 The roiling inward of a stilled outside, 360  
 The churning out of all those blood-fed lines,  
 The nights of many schemes and little sleep,  
 The full brain hammered hot with too much thinking,  
 The vexed heart over-worn with too much aching,—  
 This weary jangling of conjoined affairs 365  
 Made out of elements that have no end,  
 And all confused at once, I understand,  
 Is not what makes a man to live forever.  
 O no, not now! He'll not be going now:  
 There'll be time yet for God knows what explosions 370  
 Before he goes. He'll stay awhile. Just wait:  
 Just wait a year or two for Cleopatra,  
 For she's to be a balsam and a comfort;

3. Cf. Hamlet's soliloquy on immortality in Act III, Scene 1, ll. 56–88.

4. Literally, one who mounts upon a bench; a charlatan.

5. A lizard or newt.

6. In *Timber, or Discoveries*, Jonson wrote: "The Players have often mentioned it as an honour to *Shakespeare*, that in his writing \* \* \* he never blotted out a line. My answer bath beene, would he had blotted a thousand.

\* \* \* I had not told posterity this, but \* \* \* to justify mine owne candor, (for I loved the man, and doe honour his memory—on this side Idolatry—as much as any)."

7. Compare ll. 359–366 with the first twelve lines of Shakespeare's Sonnet XXX, beginning, "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought / I summon up remembrance of things past \* \* \*"



And that's not all a jape of mine now, either.  
 For granted once the old way of Apollo 375  
 Sings in a man, he may then, if he's able,  
 Strike unafraid whatever strings he will  
 Upon the last and wildest of new lyres;  
 Nor out of his new magic, though it hymn  
 The shrieks of dungeoned hell, shall he create 380  
 A madness or a gloom to shut quite out  
 A cleaving daylight, and a last great calm  
 Triumphant over shipwreck and all storms.  
 He might have given Aristotle creeps,  
 But surely would have given him his *katharsis*.<sup>8</sup> 385

He'll not be going yet. There's too much yet  
 Unsung within the man. But when he goes,  
 I'd stake ye coin o' the realm his only care  
 For a phantom world he sounded and found wanting  
 Will be a portion here, a portion there, 390  
 Of this or that thing or some other thing  
 That has a patent and intrinsic  
 Equivalence in those egregious shillings.<sup>9</sup>  
 And yet he knows. God help him! Tell me, now,  
 If ever there was anything let loose 395  
 On earth by gods or devils heretofore  
 Like this mad, careful, proud, indifferent Shakespeare!  
 Where was it, if it ever was? By heaven,  
 'Twas never yet in Rhodes or Pergamon—  
 In Thebes or Nineveh, a thing like this! 400  
 No thing like this was ever out of England;  
 And that he knows. I wonder if he cares.  
 Perhaps he does. . . . O Lord, that House in Stratford!

1915, 1916

## The Man Against the Sky

Between me and the sunset, like a dome  
 Against the glory of a world on fire,  
 Now burned a sudden hill,  
 Bleak, round, and high, by flame-lit height made higher,

8. Aristotle suggests that great tragedy provides an emotional catharsis by purifying the spectator of base or selfish passions in his vicarious suffering of the events enacted upon the stage.

9. Shakespeare's will has been regarded as evidence of his concern for material success. Making no reference to his life

as a writer, he distributed a considerable estate to daughters and other relatives, to his editors Heming and Condell, to the actor Burbage, and to friends for the purchase of mourning rings. As an afterthought, he inserted, "To my wife, Anne, my second-best bed."

With nothing on it for the flame to kill 5  
 Save one who moved and was alone up there  
 To loom before the chaos and the glare  
 As if he were the last god going home  
 Unto his last desire.

Dark, marvelous, and inscrutable he moved on 10  
 Till down the fiery distance he was gone,  
 Like one of those eternal, remote things  
 That range across a man's imaginings  
 When a sure music fills him and he knows  
 What he may say thereafter to few men,— 15  
 The touch of ages having wrought  
 An echo and a glimpse of what he thought  
 A phantom or a legend until then;  
 For whether lighted over ways that save,  
 Or lured from all repose, 20  
 If he go on too far to find a grave,  
 Mostly alone he goes.

Even he, who stood where I had found him,  
 On high with fire all round him,  
 Who moved along the molten west, 25  
 And over the round hill's crest  
 That seemed half ready with him to go down,  
 Flame-bitten and flame-cleft,  
 As if there were to be no last thing left  
 Of a nameless unimaginable town,— 30  
 Even he who climbed and vanished may have taken  
 Down to the perils of a depth not known,  
 From death defended though by men forsaken,  
 The bread that every man must eat alone;  
 He may have walked while others hardly dared 35  
 Look on to see him stand where many fell;  
 And upward out of that, as out of hell,  
 He may have sung and striven  
 To mount where more of him shall yet be given,  
 Bereft of all retreat, 40  
 To sevenfold heat,—  
 As on a day when three in Dura shared  
 The furnace,<sup>1</sup> and were spared  
 For glory by that king of Babylon  
 Who made himself so great that God, who heard, 45  
 Covered him with long feathers, like a bird.

1. Cf. Daniel iii and iv. Three Jews, refusing to worship the idols of Babylon, survived unscathed the "fiery furnace"

of King Nebuchadnezzar, who was converted after the punishment described in l. 46.

Again, he may have gone down easily,  
By comfortable altitudes, and found,  
As always, underneath him solid ground  
Whereon to be sufficient and to stand 50  
Possessed already of the promised land,  
Far stretched and fair to see:  
A good sight, verily,  
And one to make the eyes of her who bore him  
Shine glad with hidden tears. 55  
Why question of his case of who before him,  
In one place or another where they left  
Their names as far behind them as their bones,  
And yet by dint of slaughter, toil and theft,  
And shrewdly sharpened stones, 60  
Carved hard the way for his ascendancy  
Through deserts of lost years?  
Why trouble him now who sees and hears  
No more than what his innocence requires,  
And therefore to no other height aspires 65  
Than one at which he neither quails nor tires?  
He may do more by seeing what he sees  
Than others eager for iniquities;  
He may, by seeing all things for the best,  
Incite futurity to do the rest. 70

Or with an even likelihood,  
He may have met with atrabilious eyes  
The fires of time on equal terms and passed  
Indifferently down, until at last  
His only kind of grandeur would have been, 75  
Apparently, in being seen.  
He may have had for evil or for good  
No argument; he may have had no care  
For what without himself went anywhere  
To failure or to glory, and least of all 80  
For such a stale, flamboyant miracle;  
He may have been the prophet of an art  
Immovable to old idolatries;  
He may have been a player without a part,  
Annoyed that even the sun should have the skies 85  
For such a flaming way to advertise;  
He may have been a painter sick at heart  
With Nature's toiling for a new surprise;  
He may have been a cynic, who now, for all  
Of anything divine that his effete 90

Negation may have tasted,  
 Saw truth in his own image, rather small,  
 Forbore to fever the ephemeral,  
 Found any barren height a good retreat  
 From any swarming street, 95  
 And in the sun saw power superbly wasted;  
 And when the primitive old-fashioned stars  
 Came out again to shine on joys and wars  
 More primitive, and all arrayed for doom,  
 He may have proved a world a sorry thing 100  
 In his imagining,  
 And life a lighted highway to the tomb.

Or, mounting with infirm unsearching tread,  
 His hopes to chaos led,  
 He may have stumbled up there from the past, 105  
 And with an aching strangeness viewed the last  
 Abysmal conflagration of his dreams,—  
 A flame where nothing seems  
 To burn but flame itself, by nothing fed;  
 And while it all went out, 110  
 Not even the faint anodyne of doubt  
 May then have eased a painful going down  
 From pictured heights of power and lost renown,  
 Revealed at length to his outlived endeavor  
 Remote and unapproachable forever; 115  
 And at his heart there may have gnawed  
 Sick memories of a dead faith foiled and flawed  
 And long dishonored by the living death  
 Assigned alike by chance  
 To brutes and microphants; 120  
 And anguish fallen on those he loved around him  
 May once have dealt the last blow to confound him,  
 And so have left him as death leaves a child,  
 Who sees it all too near;  
 And he who knows no young way to forget 125  
 May struggle to the tomb unreconciled.  
 Whatever suns may rise or set  
 There may be nothing kinder for him here  
 Than shafts and agonies;  
 And under these 130  
 He may cry out and stay on horribly;  
 Or, seeing in death too small a thing to fear,  
 He may go forward like a stoic Roman

Where pangs and terrors in his pathway lie,—  
Or, seizing the swift logic of a woman,  
Curse God and die.<sup>2</sup> 135

Or maybe there, like many another one  
Who might have stood aloft and looked ahead,  
Black-drawn against wild red,  
He may have built, unawed by fiery gules 140  
That in him no commotion stirred,  
A living reason out of molecules  
Why molecules occurred,  
And one for smiling when he might have sighed  
Had he seen far enough, 145  
And in the same inevitable stuff  
Discovered an odd reason too for pride  
In being what he must have been by laws  
Infrangible and for no kind of cause.  
Deterred by no confusion or surprise 150  
He may have seen with his mechanic eyes  
A world without a meaning, and had room,  
Alone amid magnificence and doom,  
To build himself an airy monument  
That should, or fail him in his vague intent, 155  
Outlast an accidental universe—  
To call it nothing worse—  
Or, by the burrowing guile  
Of Time disintegrated and effaced,  
Like once-remembered mighty trees go down 160  
To ruin, of which by man may now be traced  
No part sufficient even to be rotten,  
And in the book of things that are forgotten  
Is entered as a thing not quite worth while.  
He may have been so great 165  
That satraps would have shivered at his frown,  
And all he prized alive may rule a state  
No larger than a grave that holds a clown;  
He may have been a master of his fate,  
And of his atoms,—ready as another 170  
In his emergence to exonerate  
His father and his mother;  
He may have been a captain of a host,  
Self-cloquent and ripe for prodigies,  
Doomed here to swell by dangerous degrees, 175

2. *Cf.* Job ii: 9. So Job's wife advised her husband in the midst of his first afflictions.

And then give up the ghost.  
 Nahum's great grasshoppers<sup>3</sup> were such as these,  
 Sun-scattered and soon lost.

Whatever the dark road he may have taken,  
 This man who stood on high 180  
 And faced alone the sky,  
 Whatever drove or lured or guided him,—  
 A vision answering a faith unshaken,  
 An easy trust assumed by easy trials,  
 A sick negation born of weak denials, 185  
 A crazed abhorrence of an old condition,  
 A blind attendance on a brief ambition,—  
 Whatever stayed him or derided him,  
 His way was even as ours;  
 And we, with all our wounds and all our powers, 190  
 Must each await alone at his own height  
 Another darkness or another light;  
 And there, of our poor self dominion reft,  
 If inference and reason shun  
 Hell, Heaven, and Oblivion, 195  
 May thwarted will (perforce precarious,  
 But for our conservation better thus)  
 Have no misgiving left  
 Of doing yet what here we leave undone?  
 Or if unto the last of these we cleave, 200  
 Believing or protesting we believe  
 In such an idle and ephemeral  
 Florescence of the diabolical,—  
 If, robbed of two fond old enormities,  
 Our being had no onward auguries, 205  
 What then were this great love of ours to say  
 For launching other lives to voyage again  
 A little farther into time and pain,  
 A little faster in a futile chase  
 For a kingdom and a power and a Race 210  
 That would have still in sight  
 A manifest end of ashes and eternal night?  
 Is this the music of the toys we shake  
 So loud,—as if there might be no mistake  
 Somewhere in our indomitable will? 215  
 Are we no greater than the noise we make  
 Along one blind atomic pilgrimage

3. See "a captain of a host," l. 173, above, and Nahum iii: 17. The prophet, condemning the corrupt and decadent

pretentiousness of Nineveh, calls her captains "great grasshoppers \* \* \* when the sun arises they flee away."

Whereon by crass chance billeted we go  
Because our brains and bones and cartilage  
Will have it so? 220  
If this we say, then let us all be still  
About our share in it, and live and die  
More quietly thereby.

Where was he going, this man against the sky?  
You know not, nor do I. 225  
But this we know, if we know anything:  
'That we may laugh and fight and sing  
And of our transience here make offering  
To an orient Word<sup>4</sup> that will not be erased,  
Or, save in incommunicable gleams 230  
Too permanent for dreams,  
Be found or known.  
No tonic and ambitious irritant  
Of increase or of want  
Has made an otherwise insensate waste 235  
Of ages overthrown  
A ruthless, veiled, implacable foretaste  
Of other ages that are still to be  
Depleted and rewarded variously  
Because a few, by fate's economy, 240  
Shall seem to move the world the way it goes;  
No soft evangel of equality,  
Safe-cradled in a communal repose  
'That huddles into death and may at last  
Be covered well with equatorial snows— 245  
And all for what, the devil only knows—  
Will aggregate an inkling to confirm  
The credit of a sage or of a worm,  
Or tell us why one man in five  
Should have a care to stay alive 250  
While in his heart he feels no violence  
Laid on his humor and intelligence  
When infant Science makes a pleasant face  
And waves again that hollow toy, the Race;  
No planetary trap where souls are wrought 255  
For nothing but the sake of being caught  
And sent again to nothing will attune  
Itself to any key of any reason  
Why man should hunger through another season  
To find out why 'twere better late than soon 260

4. Cf. John i: 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

1260 · *Edwin Arlington Robinson*

To go away and let the sun and moon  
 And all the silly stars illuminate  
 A place for creeping things,  
 And those that root and trumpet and have wings,  
 And herd and ruminates, 265  
 Or dive and flash and poise in rivers and seas,  
 Or by their loyal tails in lofty trees  
 Hang screeching lewd victorious derision  
 Of man's immortal vision.

Shall we, because Eternity records 270  
 Too vast an answer for the time-born words  
 We spell, whereof so many are dead that once  
 In our capricious lexicons  
 Were so alive and final, hear no more  
 The Word itself, the living word 275  
 That none alive has ever heard  
 Or ever spelt,  
 And few have ever felt  
 Without the fears and old surrenderings  
 And terrors that began 280  
 When Death let fall a feather from his wings  
 And humbled the first man?  
 Because the weight of our humility,  
 Wherefrom we gain  
 A little wisdom and much pain, 285  
 Falls here too sore and there too tedious,  
 Are we in anguish or complacency,  
 Not looking far enough ahead  
 To see by what mad couriers we are led  
 Along the roads of the ridiculous, 290  
 To pity ourselves and laugh at faith  
 And while we curse life bear it?  
 And if we see the soul's dead end in death,  
 Are we to fear it?  
 What folly is here that has not yet a name 295  
 Unless we say outright that we are liars?  
 What have we seen beyond our sunset fires  
 That lights again the way by which we came?  
 Why pay we such a price, and one we give  
 So clamoringly, for each racked empty day 300  
 That leads one more last human hope away,  
 As quiet fiends would lead past our crazed eyes  
 Our children to an unseen sacrifice?  
 If after all that we have lived and thought,



All comes to Nought,—  
 If there be nothing after Now,  
 And we be nothing anyhow,  
 And we know that,—why live?  
 'Twere sure but weaklings' vain distress  
 To suffer dungeons where so many doors  
 Will open on the cold eternal shores  
 That look sheer down  
 To the dark tideless floods of Nothingness  
 Where all who know may drown.

305  
310  
1916

### Mr. Flood's Party

Old Eben Flood, climbing alone one night  
 Over the hill between the town below  
 And the forsaken upland hermitage  
 That held as much as he should ever know  
 On earth again of home, paused warily.  
 The road was his with not a native near;  
 And Eben, having leisure, said aloud;  
 For no man else in Tilbury Town to hear:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have the harvest moon  
 Again, and we may not have many more;  
 The bird is on the wing, the poet says,  
 And you and I have said it here before.  
 Drink to the bird."<sup>5</sup> He raised up to the light  
 The jug that he had gone so far to fill,  
 And answered huskily: "Well, Mr. Flood,  
 Since you propose it, I believe I will."

Alone, as if enduring to the end  
 A valiant armor of scarred hopes outworn,  
 He stood there in the middle of the road  
 Like Roland's ghost winding a silent horn.<sup>6</sup>  
 Below him, in the town among the trees,  
 Where friends of other days had honored him,  
 A phantom salutation of the dead  
 Rang thinly till old Eben's eyes were dim.

Then, as a mother lays her sleeping child  
 Down tenderly, fearing it may awake,

5  
10  
15  
20  
25

5. Cf. Edward FitzGerald, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, ll. 25-28: "Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring / Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling: / The Bird of Time

has but a little way / To flutter and the Bird is on the Wing." 6. At Roncesvalles (A.D. 778), when the battle became hopeless, Roland at last blew his horn for help and died.

He set the jug down slowly at his feet  
 With trembling care, knowing that most things break;  
 And only when assured that on firm earth  
 It stood, as the uncertain lives of men 30  
 Assuredly did not, he paced away,  
 And with his hand extended paused again:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have not met like this  
 In a long time; and many a change has come  
 To both of us, I fear, since last it was 35  
 We had a drop together. Welcome home!"  
 Convivially returning with himself,  
 Again he raised the jug up to the light;  
 And with an acquiescent quaver said:  
 "Well, Mr. Flood, if you insist, I might. 40

"Only a very little, Mr. Flood—  
 For auld lang sync. No more, sir; that will do."  
 So, for the time, apparently it did,  
 And Eben evidently thought so too;  
 For soon amid the silver loneliness 45  
 Of night he lifted up his voice and sang,  
 Secure, with only two moons listening,  
 Until the whole harmonious landscape rang—

"For auld lang syne." The weary throat gave out,  
 The last word wavered; and the song being done, 50  
 He raised again the jug regretfully  
 And shook his head, and was again alone.  
 There was not much that was ahead of him,  
 And there was nothing in the town below—  
 Where strangers would have shut the many doors 55  
 That many friends had opened long ago.

1920

## The Mill

The miller's wife had waited long,  
 The tea was cold, the fire was dead;  
 And there might yet be nothing wrong  
 In how he went and what he said:  
 "There are no millers any more," 5  
 Was all that she had heard him say;  
 And he had lingered at the door  
 So long that it seemed yesterday.

Sick with a fear that had no form  
She knew that she was there at last; 10  
And in the mill there was a warm  
And mealy fragrance of the past.  
What else there was would only seem  
To say again what he had meant;  
And what was hanging from a beam 15  
Would not have heeded where she went.  
And if she thought it followed her,  
She may have reasoned in the dark  
That one way of the few there were  
Would hide her and would leave no mark: 20  
Black water, smooth above the weir  
Like starry velvet in the night,  
Though ruffled once, would soon appear  
The same as ever to the sight.  
1920

### Firelight

Ten years together without yet a cloud,  
They seek each other's eyes at intervals  
Of gratefulness to firelight and four walls  
For love's obliteration of the crowd.  
Serenely and perennially endowed 5  
And bowered as few may be, their joy recalls  
No snake, no sword; and over them there falls  
The blessing of what neither says aloud.  
Wiser for silence, they were not so glad  
Were she to read the graven tale of lines 10  
On the wan face of one somewhere alone;  
Nor were they more content could he have had  
Her thoughts a moment since of one who shines  
Apart, and would be hers if he had known.  
1920

### The Tree in Pamela's Garden

Pamela was too gentle to deceive  
Her roses. "Let the men stay where they are,"  
She said, "and if Apollo's avatar<sup>7</sup>

7. Embodiment. Apollo, smitten by Cupid's golden arrow, fell in love with Daphne, whom the prankish Cupid had struck with the leaden arrow of reluctance. Daphne was saved from Apollo's pursuit by being changed into a laurel

Be one of them, I shall not have to grieve."  
 And so she made all Tilbury Town believe 5  
 She sighed a little more for the North Star  
 Than over men, and only in so far  
 As she was in a garden was like Eve.

Her neighbors—doing all that neighbors can  
 To make romance of reticence meanwhile— 10  
 Seeing that she had never loved a man,  
 Wished Pamela had a cat, or a small bird,  
 And only would have wondered at her smile  
 Could they have seen that she had overheard.

1921

New England<sup>8</sup>

Here where the wind is always north-north-east  
 And children learn to walk on frozen toes,  
 Wonder begets an envy of all those  
 Who boil elsewhere with such a lyric yeast  
 Of love that you will hear them at a feast 5  
 Where demons would appeal for some repose,  
 Still clamoring where the chalice overflows  
 And crying wildest who have drunk the least.

Passion is here a soilure of the wits,  
 We're told, and Love a cross for them to bear; 10  
 Joy shivers in the corner where she knits  
 And Conscience always has the rocking-chair,  
 Cheerful as when she tortured into fits  
 The first cat that was ever killed by Care.

1925

tree. Cf. the reference to Eve in l. 8, recalling another tree in another garden. 8. In a Gardiner paper Robinson defended this sonnet as "an oblique at-

tack" on those ridiculing the "alleged emotional and moral frigidity" of New England.

## ROBERT FROST

(1874<sup>1</sup>-)

Among the American poets of stature since Whitman, Robert Frost is the most universal in his appeal. His art is an act of clarification, an act which, without simplifying the truth, renders it in some degree accessible to everyone. Frost found his poetry in the familiar objects and character of New England, but peo-

1. Not 1875 as often given. Frost celebrated his eightieth birthday in 1954.

ple who have never seen New Hampshire or Vermont, reading his poems in California or Virginia, experience their revelation.

It is therefore not surprising that this poet of New England was first recognized in old England and that his boyhood was passed in California. His father, a journalist of southern extraction, left New Hampshire during the Civil War, and his professional engagements led him to California. There the poet was born on March 26, 1874, and was named Robert Lee in memory of the Old Dominion. He was eleven when his father died and his mother returned to her people in Lawrence, Mass., and Amherst, N. H.

Life with relatives proved difficult, so his mother went to teach school in Salem, N. H. Frost later attended Lawrence High School. On graduation in 1892 he was one of two valedictorians; the other was Elinor White, whom he married three years later. Reluctant to accept his grandfather's support at Dartmouth College, Frost did not finish the first semester. Instead he tried himself out on a country paper, then turned to teaching school. He sent out his verses in quantity after 1890, but only a negligible few were accepted before 1913. Like Robinson he was much ahead of his time.

Faced with disappointment as a poet, his family growing, the young Frost accepted his grandfather's assistance, and studied at Harvard for two years (1897-1899), but he concluded that formal study was not the way

for him. His good foundation in the classics is apparent in his extraordinary word sense, in the disciplined forms of his poetry, and in his pagan delight in nature. His reading of science and philosophy has been influential throughout his poetry. But he had a deep-rooted fear: "They would have made me into a professor, or into a professional," he once said.

In 1900, with his grandfather's help, he procured a farm at Derry, New Hampshire, supporting his family, including four children, by a combination of farming and teaching. From 1900 to 1911 he taught English at Pinkerton Academy, Derry. In 1911-1912 he conducted a course in psychology at the State Normal School in Plymouth, nearby. Still he received from American editors the same heart-breaking refusals.

Elinor Frost, a steady source of inspiration, encouraged his instinct for a desperate remedy. They sold the farm in 1912 and on the small proceeds went to England, where the first stirrings of a new poetry movement had been noted. Wishing, as he says, to live "beneath a thatched roof" they moved to a small farmstead in the country. There Wilfred W. Gibson and Lascelles Abercrombie were neighbors, and others of the so-called "Georgians," Edward Thomas and Rupert Brooke, came as guests. Soon *A Boy's Will* (1913) was hailed in England as a work of genuine merit. It was followed in 1914 by *North of Boston*, one of the great volumes of this century. Both books were republished in the

United States within the year. At this point, according to a friend, Frost said to his wife, "My book has gone home; we must go too." In 1915 they were settled again on a New Hampshire farm, this time near Franconia, which suggested the title of *Mountain Interval* (1916).

In 1916 he read "The Axe-Helve" as the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard University. Frost had magnificent qualities as a public reader; his reading tours during many years made him and his poetry household property and stimulated a popular interest in poetry. Also in 1916, Frost became "poet in residence" at Amherst College, where he returned for a time each winter for four years. At various times he has served as lecturer or fellow at Wesleyan, Michigan, Dartmouth, Yale, and Harvard. In 1920 he participated in the founding of the Bread Loaf School of English (Middlebury College, Vermont), and he has lectured there many summers. He lives nearby on his own land at Ripton.

Frost's later publications have appeared at rather long intervals, yet almost every poem, large or small, is unforgettable. His *Selected Poems* (1923, revised 1928) was followed by *New Hampshire* (1923), which won the Pulitzer Prize. This is one of his longest poems, but one of his most witty and wise, an anecdotal discussion of the values of life and character, flavored with New England examples. In 1928 he published *West-Running Brook*, its title poem a complex masterpiece.

*Collected Poems* first appeared in 1930, and won him his second Pulitzer Prize. *A Further Range* (1936) also was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. His later volumes of lyrics are *A Witness Tree* (1942) and *Steeple Bush* (1947). *A Masque of Reason* (1945) and *A Masque of Mercy* (1947) are dramatic dialogues—discussions of his religious insights and criticism of contemporary society.

Few major poets have shown such remarkable consistency as Robert Frost—the whole poet is the whole man, and he captures the reader as much by the grandeur of his personality as by impeccable rightness of form and phrase. "Art strips life to form," he has said, and the substance and the words of his poems coexist in one identity. In language, he has sought to catch what he has called the "tones of speech," but even more successfully than Wordsworth he has pruned the "language really used by men" to achieve a propriety that spontaneous speech cannot attain.

For all his descriptive realism, Frost is temperamentally a poet of meditative sobriety. He is no philosopher with a formal system. The truths he seeks are innate in the heart of man and in common objects. But people forget, and poetry, he says, "makes you remember what you didn't know you knew." A poem is not didactic, but provides an immediate experience which "begins in delight, and ends in wisdom"; and it provides at least "a momentary stay against confusion." Of man alone or man in society Frost demands a

responsible individualism controlled by an inner mandate, and thus his views remind us of the transcendentalism of earlier New Englanders. Like Thoreau and Emerson, Frost is willing to become a rebel in this cause, and like them, but so unlike the skeptical poets of his age, he has had, he says, only "a lover's quarrel with the world."

The standard edition of Robert Frost is *Complete Poems*, 1949.

Biographical and critical studies are G. B. Munson, *Robert Frost: A Study in Sensibility and Good Sense*, 1927; Sidney Cox, *Robert Frost: Original "Ordinary Man,"* 1929; Caroline Ford, *The Less Traveled Road: A Study of Robert Frost*, 1935; Lawrance R. Thompson, *Fire and Ice: The Art and Thought of Robert Frost*, 1942; Sidney Cox, *Swinger of Birches*, 1957; Reginald L. Cook, *The Dimensions of Robert Frost*, 1958; and a complete biography by Elizabeth S. Sergeant, *Robert Frost: The Trial By Existence*, 1960. Richard H. Thornton, in *Recognition of Robert Frost*, 1937, collected early, significant articles on Frost. A bibliography is *The Intervals of Robert Frost*, by Louis and Esther Mertins, 1947.

## The Wood-Pile

Out walking in the frozen swamp one grey day,  
 I paused and said, 'I will turn back from here.  
 No, I will go on farther—and we shall see.'  
 'The hard snow held me, save where now and then  
 One foot went through. The view was all in lines 5  
 Straight up and down of tall slim trees  
 Too much alike to mark or name a place by  
 So as to say for certain I was here  
 Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.  
 A small bird flew before me. He was careful 10  
 To put a tree between us when he lighted,  
 And say no word to tell me who he was  
 Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought.  
 He thought that I was after him for a feather—  
 'The white one in his tail; like one who takes 15  
 Everything said as personal to himself.  
 One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.  
 And then there was a pile of wood for which  
 I forgot him and let his little fear  
 Carry him off the way I might have gone, 20  
 Without so much as wishing him good-night.  
 He went behind it to make his last stand.  
 It was a cord of maple, cut and split  
 And piled—and measured, four by four by eight.  
 And not another like it could I see. 25  
 No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.  
 And it was older sure than this year's cutting,  
 Or even last year's or the year's before.  
 The wood was grey and the bark warping off it

And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis 30  
 Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.  
 What held it though on one side was a tree  
 Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,  
 These latter about to fall. I thought that only  
 Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks 35  
 Could so forget his handiwork on which  
 He spent himself, the labour of his axe,  
 And leave it there far from a useful fireplace  
 To warm the frozen swamp as best it could  
 With the slow smokeless burning of decay. 40

1914

### After Apple-Picking

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree  
 Toward heaven still,  
 And there's a barrel that I didn't fill  
 Beside it, and there may be two or three  
 Apples I didn't pick upon some bough. 5  
 But I am done with apple-picking now.  
 Essence of winter sleep is on the night,  
 The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.  
 I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight  
 I got from looking through a pane of glass 10  
 I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough  
 And held against the world of hoary grass.  
 It melted, and I let it fall and break.  
 But I was well  
 Upon my way to sleep before it fell, 15  
 And I could tell  
 What form my dreaming was about to take.  
 Magnified apples appear and disappear,  
 Stem end and blossom end,  
 And every fleck of russet showing clear. 20  
 My instep arch not only keeps the ache,  
 It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.  
 I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.  
 And I keep hearing from the cellar bin  
 The rumbling sound 25  
 Of load on load of apples coming in.  
 For I have had too much  
 Of apple-picking: I am overtired  
 Of the great harvest I myself desired.  
 There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch, 30



Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.  
 For all  
 That struck the earth,  
 No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,  
 Went surely to the cider-apple heap 35  
 As of no worth.  
 One can see what will trouble  
 This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.  
 Were he not gone,  
 The woodchuck could say whether it's like his 40  
 Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,  
 Or just some human sleep.

1914

## Home Burial<sup>1</sup>

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs  
 Before she saw him. She was starting down,  
 Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.  
 She took a doubtful step and then undid it  
 To raise herself and look again. He spoke 5  
 Advancing toward her: 'What is it you see  
 From up there always—for I want to know.'  
 She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,  
 And her face changed from terrified to dull.  
 He said to gain time: 'What is it you see,' 10  
 Mounting until she cowered under him.  
 'I will find out now—you must tell me, dear.'  
 She, in her place, refused him any help  
 With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.  
 She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see, 15  
 Blind creature; and a while he didn't see.  
 But at last he murmured, 'Oh,' and again, 'Oh.'  
 'What is it—what?' she said.

'Just that I see.'

'You don't,' she challenged. 'Tell me what it is.'

'The wonder is I didn't see at once. 20  
 I never noticed it from here before.  
 I must be wonted to it—that's the reason.  
 The little graveyard where my people are!  
 So small the window frames the whole of it.  
 Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it? 25

1. The family burial ground near the farmhouse can still be seen in remoter parts of New England and other eastern areas.

There are three stones of slate and one of marble,  
 Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight  
 On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.  
 But I understand: it is not the stones,  
 But the child's mound—'

'Don't, don't, don't, don't,' she cried.

30

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm  
 That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;  
 And turned on him with such a daunting look,  
 He said twice over before he knew himself:  
 'Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?'

35

'Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!  
 I must get out of here. I must get air.  
 I don't know rightly whether any man can.'

'Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.  
 Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs.'  
 He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.  
 'There's something I should like to ask you, dear.'

40

'You don't know how to ask it.'

'Help me, then.'

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

'My words are nearly always an offence.  
 I don't know how to speak of anything  
 So as to please you. But I might be taught  
 I should suppose. I can't say I see how.  
 A man must partly give up being a man  
 With women-folk. We could have some arrangement  
 By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off  
 Anything special you're a-mind to name.  
 Though I don't like such things 'twixt those that love.  
 Two that don't love can't live together without them.  
 But two that do can't live together with them.'  
 She moved the latch a little. 'Don't—don't go.  
 Don't carry it to someone else this time.  
 Tell me about it if it's something human.  
 Let me into your grief. I'm not so much  
 Unlike other folks as your standing there  
 Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.  
 I do think, though, you overdo it a little.  
 What was it brought you up to think it the thing  
 To take your mother-loss of a first child

45

50

55

60

So inconsolably—in the face of love. 65  
 You'd think his memory might be satisfied—'

'There you go sneering now!'

'I'm not, I'm not!  
 You make me angry. I'll come down to you.  
 God, what a woman! And it's come to this,  
 A man can't speak of his own child that's dead.' 70

'You can't because you don't know how to speak.  
 If you had any feelings, you that dug  
 With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave;  
 I saw you from that very window there,  
 Making the gravel leap and leap in air, 75  
 Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly  
 And roll back down the mound beside the hole.  
 I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you.  
 And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs  
 To look again, and still your spade kept lifting. 80  
 Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice  
 Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,  
 But I went near to see with my own eyes.  
 You could sit there with the stains on your shoes  
 Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave 85  
 And talk about your everyday concerns.  
 You had stood the spade up against the wall  
 Outside there in the entry, for I saw it.'

'I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.  
 I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed.' 90

'I can repeat the very words you were saying.  
 "Three foggy mornings and one rainy day  
 Will rot the best birch fence a man can build."  
 Think of it, talk like that at such a time!  
 What had how long it takes a birch to rot 95  
 To do with what was in the darkened parlour.  
 You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go  
 With anyone to death, comes so far short  
 They might as well not try to go at all.  
 No, from the time when one is sick to death, 100  
 One is alone, and he dies more alone.  
 Friends make pretence of following to the grave,  
 But before one is in it, their minds are turned  
 And making the best of their way back to life  
 And living people, and things they understand. 105  
 But the world's evil. I won't have grief so  
 If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!'

'There, you have said it all and you feel better.  
 You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.  
 The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up. 110  
 Amy! There's someone coming down the road!  
 'You—oh, you think the talk is all. I must go—  
 Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you—'  
 'If—you—do!' She was opening the door wider.  
 'Where do you mean to go? First tell me that. 115  
 I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will!*—'  
 1914

## Blueberries

'You ought to have seen what I saw on my way  
 To the village, through Patterson's pasture to-day:  
 Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb,  
 Real sky-blue, and heavy, and ready to drum  
 In the cavernous pail of the first one to come! 5  
 And all ripe together, not some of them green  
 And some of them ripe! You ought to have seen!  
 'I don't know what part of the pasture you mean.'  
 'You know where they cut off the woods—let me see—  
 It was two years ago—or no!—can it be 10  
 No longer than that?—and the following fall  
 The fire ran and burned it all up but the wall.'  
 'Why, there hasn't been time for the bushes to grow.  
 That's always the way with the blueberries, though:  
 There may not have been the ghost of a sign 15  
 Of them anywhere under the shade of the pine,  
 But get the pine out of the way, you may burn  
 The pasture all over until not a fern  
 Or grass-blade is left, not to mention a stick,  
 And presto, they're up all around you as thick 20  
 And hard to explain as a conjuror's trick.'  
 'It must be on charcoal they fatten their fruit.  
 I taste in them sometimes the flavour of soot.  
 And after all really they're ebony skinned:  
 The blue's but a mist from the breath of the wind, 25  
 A tarnish that goes at a touch of the hand,  
 And less than the tan with which pickers are tanned.'  
 'Does Patterson know what he has, do you think?'

'He may and not care and so leave the chewink  
To gather them for him—you know what he is. 30  
He won't make the fact that they're rightfully his  
An excuse for keeping us other folk out.'

'I wonder you didn't see Loren about.'

'The best of it was that I did. Do you know,  
I was just getting through what the field had to show 35  
And over the wall and into the road,  
When who should come by, with a democrat-load  
Of all the young chattering Lorens alive,  
But Loren, the fatherly, out for a drive.'

'He saw you, then? What did he do? Did he frown?' 40

'He just kept nodding his head up and down.  
You know how politely he always goes by.  
But he thought a big thought—I could tell by his eye—  
Which being expressed, might be this in effect:  
"I have left those there berries, I shrewdly suspect, 45  
To ripen too long. I am greatly to blame."'

'He's a thriftier person than some I could name.'

'He seems to be thrifty; and hasn't he need,  
With the mouths of all those young Lorens to feed?  
He has brought them all up on wild berries, they say, 50  
Like birds. They store a great many away.  
They eat them the year round, and those they don't eat  
They sell in the store and buy shoes for their feet.'

'Who cares what they say? It's a nice way to live,  
Just taking what Nature is willing to give, 55  
Not forcing her hand with harrow and plow.'

'I wish you had seen his perpetual bow—  
And the air of the youngsters! Not one of them turned,  
And they looked so solemn-absurdly concerned.'

'I wish I knew half what the flock of them know 60  
Of where all the berries and other things grow,  
Cranberries in bogs and raspberries on top  
Of the boulder-strewn mountain, and when they will crop.  
I met them one day and each had a flower  
Stuck into his berries as fresh as a shower; 65  
Some strange kind—they told me it hadn't a name.'

'I've told you how once not long after we came,  
I almost provoked poor Loren to mirth

By going to him of all people on earth  
 To ask if he knew any fruit to be had 70  
 For the picking. The rascal, he said he'd be glad  
 To tell if he knew. But the year had been bad.  
 There *had* been some berries—but those were all gone.  
 He didn't say where they had been. He went on:  
 "I'm sure—I'm sure"—as polite as could be. 75  
 He spoke to his wife in the door, "Let me see,  
 Mame, we don't know any good berrying place?"  
 It was all he could do to keep a straight face.'

'If he thinks all the fruit that grows wild is for him,  
 He'll find he's mistaken. See here, for a whim, 80  
 We'll pick in the Pattersons' pasture this year.  
 We'll go in the morning, that is, if it's clear,  
 And the sun shines out warm: the vines must be wet.  
 It's so long since I picked I almost forget  
 How we used to pick berries: we took one look round, 85  
 Then sank out of sight like trolls underground,  
 And saw nothing more of each other, or heard,  
 Unless when you said I was keeping a bird  
 Away from its nest, and I said it was you.  
 "Well, one of us is." For complaining it flew 90  
 Around and around us. And then for a while  
 We picked, till I feared you had wandered a mile,  
 And I thought I had lost you. I lifted a shout  
 Too loud for the distance you were, it turned out,  
 For when you made answer, your voice was as low 95  
 As talking—you stood up beside me, you know.'

'We sha'n't have the place to ourselves to enjoy—  
 Not likely, when all the young Lorens deploy.  
 They'll be there to-morrow, or even to-night.  
 They won't be too friendly—they may be polite— 100  
 To people they look on as having no right  
 To pick where they're picking. But we won't complain.  
 You ought to have seen how it looked in the rain,  
 The fruit mixed with water in layers of leaves,  
 Like two kinds of jewels, a vision for thieves.' 105

1914

## Birches

When I see birches bend to left and right  
 Across the lines of straighter darker trees,  
 I like to think some boy's been swinging them.

But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.  
 Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them 5  
 Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning  
 After a rain. They click upon themselves  
 As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored  
 As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.  
 Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells 10  
 Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—  
 Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away  
 You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.  
 They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,  
 And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed 15  
 So low for long, they never right themselves:  
 You may see their trunks arching in the woods  
 Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground  
 Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair  
 Before them over their heads to dry in the sun. 20  
 But I was going to say when Truth broke in  
 With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm  
 I should prefer to have some boy bend them  
 As he went out and in to fetch the cows—  
 Some boy too far from town to learn baseball, 25  
 Whose only play was what he found himself,  
 Summer or winter, and could play alone.  
 One by one he subdued his father's trees  
 By riding them down over and over again  
 Until he took the stiffness out of them, 30  
 And not one but hung limp, not one was left  
 For him to conquer. He learned all there was  
 To learn about not launching out too soon  
 And so not carrying the tree away  
 Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise 35  
 To the top branches, climbing carefully  
 With the same pains you use to fill a cup  
 Up to the brim, and even above the brim.  
 Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,  
 Kicking his way down through the air to the ground. 40  
 So was I once myself a swinger of birches.  
 And so I dream of going back to be.  
 It's when I'm weary of considerations,  
 And life is too much like a pathless wood  
 Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs 45  
 Broken across it, and one eye is weeping  
 From a twig's having lashed across it open.  
 I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
 And then come back to it and begin over.

May no fate willfully misunderstand me 50  
 And half grant what I wish and snatch me away  
 Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:  
 I don't know where it's likely to go better.  
 I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,  
 And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk 55  
*Toward* heaven, till the tree could bear no more,  
 But dipped its top and set me down again.  
 That would be good both going and coming back.  
 One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

1916

## Brown's Descent

OR THE WILLY-NILLY SLIDE

Brown lived at such a lofty farm  
 That everyone for miles could see  
 His lantern when he did his chores  
 In winter after half-past three.  
 And many must have seen him make 5  
 His wild descent from there one night,  
 'Cross lots, 'cross walls, 'cross everything,  
 Describing rings of lantern light.  
 Between the house and barn the gale  
 Got him by something he had on 10  
 And blew him out on the icy crust  
 That cased the world, and he was gone!  
 Walls were all buried, trees were few:  
 He saw no stay unless he stove  
 A hole in somewhere with his heel. 15  
 But though repeatedly he strove  
 And stamped and said things to himself,  
 And sometimes something seemed to yield,  
 He gained no foothold, but pursued  
 His journey down from field to field. 20  
 Sometimes he came with arms outspread  
 Like wings, revolving in the scene  
 Upon his longer axis, and  
 With no small dignity of mien.  
 Faster or slower as he chanced, 25  
 Sitting or standing as he chose,  
 According as he feared to risk  
 His neck, or thought to spare his clothes,



He never let the lantern drop.  
And some exclaimed who saw afar 30  
The figures he described with it,  
'I wonder what those signals are

Brown makes at such an hour of night!  
He's celebrating something strange.  
I wonder if he's sold his farm, 35  
Or been made Master of the Grange.'

He reeled, he lurched, he bobbed, he checked;  
He fell and made the lantern rattle  
(But saved the light from going out.)  
So half-way down he fought the battle, 40

Incredulous of his own bad luck.  
And then becoming reconciled  
To everything, he gave it up  
And came down like a coasting child.

'Well—I—be—' that was all he said, 45  
As standing in the river road,  
He looked back up the slippery slope  
(Two miles it was) to his abode.

Sometimes as an authority  
On motor-cars, I'm asked if I 50  
Should say our stock was petered out,  
And this is my sincere reply:

Yankees are what they always were.  
Don't think Brown ever gave up hope  
Of getting home again because 55  
He couldn't climb that slippery slope;

Or even thought of standing there  
Until the January thaw  
Should take the polish off the crust.  
He bowed with grace to natural law, 60

And then went round it on his feet,  
After the manner of our stock;  
Not much concerned for those to whom,  
At that particular time o'clock,

It must have looked as if the course 65  
He steered was really straight away  
From that which he was headed for—  
Not much concerned for them, I say;

No more so than became a man—

And politician at odd seasons.

70

I've kept Brown standing in the cold

While I invested him with reasons;

But now he snapped his eyes three times;

Then shook his lantern, saying, 'He's

'Bout out!'<sup>2</sup> and took the long way home

75

By road, a matter of several miles.

1916

### Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green<sup>3</sup> is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

5

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay.

1923

### A Star in a Stone-boat<sup>4</sup>

Never tell me that not one star of all

That slip from heaven at night and softly fall

Has been picked up with stones to build a wall.

Some laborer found one faded and stone cold,

And saving that its weight suggested gold,

5

And tugged it from his first too certain hold,

He noticed nothing in it to remark.

He was not used to handling stars thrown dark

And lifeless from an interrupted arc.

He did not recognize in that smooth coal

10

The one thing palpable besides the soul

To penetrate the air in which we roll.

He did not see how like a flying thing

It brooded ant-eggs, and had one large wing,

One not so large for flying in a ring,

15

2. The oil is about out.

3. In Old English, "green" signified "growth" as well as a color. This poem contains several dual references; for example, the Hebrew word "Eden" means

"delight," and is here contrasted with "grief."

4. A barrow or sledge for transporting stones, still used for "building wall" in New England.

And a long Bird of Paradise's tail,  
(Though these when not in use to fly and trail  
It drew back in its body like a snail);

Nor know that he might move it from the spot,  
The harm was done; from having been star-shot 20  
The very nature of the soil was hot

And burning to yield flowers instead of grain,  
Flowers fanned and not put out by all the rain  
Poured on them by his prayers prayed in vain.

He moved it roughly with an iron bar, 25  
He loaded an old stone-boat with the star  
And not, as you might think, a flying car,

Such as even poets would admit perforce  
More practical than Pegasus the horse<sup>4a</sup>  
If it could put a star back in its course. 30

He dragged it through the ploughed ground at a pace  
But faintly reminiscent of the race  
Of jostling rock in interstellar space.

It went for building stone, and I, as though  
Commanded in a dream, forever go 35  
To right the wrong that this should have been so.

Yet ask where else it could have gone as well,  
I do not know—I cannot stop to tell:  
He might have left it lying where it fell.

From following walls I never lift my eye 40  
Except at night to places in the sky  
Where showers of charted meteors let fly.

Some may know what they seek in school and church,  
And why they seek it there; for what I search  
I must go measuring stone walls, perch on perch; 45

Sure that though not a star of death and birth,  
So not to be compared, perhaps, in worth  
To such resorts of life as Mars and Earth,

Though not, I say, a star of death and sin,  
It yet has poles, and only needs a spin 50  
To show its worldly nature and begin

4a. The winged horse of Greek mythology, figuratively associated with poetic inspiration, whose name was given to a

northern constellation near the spring equinoctial point (*cf.* l. 30).

To chafe and shuffle in my calloused palm  
 And run off in strange tangents with my arm  
 As fish do with the line in first alarm.

Such as it is, it promises the prize 55  
 Of the one world complete in any size  
 That I am like to compass, fool or wise.

1923

## Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,  
 Some say in ice.  
 From what I've tasted of desire  
 I hold with those who favor fire.  
 But if it had to perish twice, 5  
 I think I know enough of hate  
 To say that for destruction ice  
 Is also great  
 And would suffice.

1923

## Fragmentary Blue

Why make so much of fragmentary blue  
 In here and there a bird, or butterfly,  
 Or flower, or wearing-stone, or open eye,  
 When heaven presents in sheets the solid hue?  
 Since earth is earth, perhaps, not heaven (as yet)— 5  
 Though some savants make earth include the sky;  
 And blue so far above us comes so high,  
 It only gives our wish for blue a whet.

1923

## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know  
 His house is in the village though;  
 He will not see me stopping here  
 To watch his woods fill up with snow.  
 My little horse must think it queer 5  
 To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake. 10  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep, 15  
And miles to go before I sleep.

1923

### The Axe-Helve

I've known ere now an interfering branch  
Of alder catch my lifted axe behind me.  
But that was in the woods, to hold my hand  
From striking at another alder's roots,  
And that was, as I say, an alder branch. 5  
This was a man, Baptiste, who stole one day  
Behind me on the snow in my own yard  
Where I was working at the chopping-block,  
And cutting nothing not cut down already.  
He caught my axe expertly on the rise, 10  
When all my strength put forth was in his favor,  
Held it a moment where it was, to calm me,  
Then took it from me—and I let him take it.  
I didn't know him well enough to know  
What it was all about. There might be something 15  
He had in mind to say to a bad neighbor  
He might prefer to say to him disarmed.  
But all he had to tell me in French-English  
Was what he thought of—not me, but my axe;  
Me only as I took my axe to heart. 20  
It was the bad axe-helve some one had sold me—  
'Made on machine,' he said, ploughing the grain  
With a thick thumbnail to show how it ran  
Across the handle's long drawn serpentine,  
Like the two strokes across a dollar sign. 25  
'You give her one good crack, she's snap raght off.  
Den where's your hax-cad flying t'rough de hair?'  
Admitted; and yet, what was that to him?  
'Come on my house and I put you one in

What's las' awhile—good hick'ry what's grow crooked, 30  
 De second growt' I cut myself—tough, tough!  
 Something to sell? That wasn't how it sounded.  
 'Den when you say you come? It's cost you nothing.  
 To-naght?'

As well to-night as any night.

Beyond an over-warmth of kitchen stove 35  
 My welcome differed from no other welcome.  
 Baptiste knew best why I was where I was.  
 So long as he would leave enough unsaid,  
 I shouldn't mind his being overjoyed  
 (If overjoyed he was) at having got me 40  
 Where I must judge if what he knew about an axe  
 That not everybody else knew was to count  
 For nothing in the measure of a neighbor.  
 Hard if, though cast away for life with Yankees,  
 A Frenchman couldn't get his human rating! 45

Mrs. Baptiste came in and rocked a chair  
 That had as many motions as the world:  
 One back and forward, in and out of shadow,  
 That got her nowhere; one more gradual,  
 Sideways, that would have run her on the stove 50  
 In time, had she not realized her danger  
 And caught herself up bodily, chair and all,  
 And set herself back where she started from.  
 'She ain't spick too much Henglish—dat's too bad.'

I was afraid, in brightening first on me, 55  
 Then on Baptiste, as if she understood  
 What passed between us, she was only feigning.  
 Baptiste was anxious for her; but no more  
 Than for himself, so placed he couldn't hope  
 To keep his bargain of the morning with me 60  
 In time to keep me from suspecting him  
 Of really never having meant to keep it.

Needlessly soon he had his axe-helves out,  
 A quiverful to choose from, since he wished me  
 To have the best he had, or had to spare— 65  
 Not for me to ask which, when what he took  
 Had beauties he had to point me out at length  
 To insure their not being wasted on me.  
 He liked to have it slender as a whipstock,  
 Free from the least knot, equal to the strain 70  
 Of bending like a sword across the knee.

He showed me that the lines of a good helve  
 Were native to the grain before the knife  
 Expressed them, and its curves were no false curves  
 Put on it from without. And there its strength lay 75  
 For the hard work. He chafed its long white body  
 From end to end with his rough hand shut round it.  
 He tried it at the eye-hole in the axe-head.  
 'Hahn, hahn,' he mused, 'don't need much taking down.'  
 Baptiste knew how to make a short job long 80  
 For love of it, and yet not waste time either.

Do you know, what we talked about was knowledge?  
 Baptiste on his defence about the children  
 He kept from school, or did his best to keep—  
 Whatever school and children and our doubts 85  
 Of laid-on education had to do  
 With the curves of his axe-helves and his having  
 Used these unscrupulously to bring me  
 To see for once the inside of his house.  
 Was I desired in friendship, partly as some one 90  
 To leave it to, whether the right to hold  
 Such doubts of education should depend  
 Upon the education of those who held them?

But now he brushed the shavings from his knee  
 And stood the axe there on its horse's hoof, 95  
 Erect, but not without its waves, as when  
 The snake stood up for evil in the Garden,—  
 Top-heavy with a heaviness his short,  
 Thick hand made light of, steel-blue chin drawn down  
 And in a little—a French touch in that. 100  
 Baptiste drew back and squinted at it, pleased;  
 'See how she's cock her head!'

1923

## The Grindstone

Having a wheel and four legs of its own  
 Has never availed the cumbersome grindstone  
 To get it anywhere that I can see.  
 These hands have helped it go, and even race;  
 Not all the motion, though, they ever lent, 5  
 Not all the miles it may have thought it went,  
 Have got it one step from the starting place.  
 It stands beside the same old apple tree.  
 The shadow of the apple tree is thin

Upon it now, its feet are fast in snow. 10  
 All other farm machinery's gone in,  
 And some of it on no more legs and wheel  
 Than the grindstone can boast to stand or go.  
 (I'm thinking chiefly of the wheelbarrow.)  
 For months it hasn't known the taste of steel, 15  
 Washed down with rusty water in a tin.  
 But standing outdoors hungry, in the cold,  
 Except in towns at night, is not a sin.  
 And, anyway, its standing in the yard  
 Under a ruinous live apple tree 20  
 Has nothing any more to do with me,  
 Except that I remember how of old  
 One summer day, all day I drove it hard,  
 And someone mounted on it rode it hard,  
 And he and I between us ground a blade. 25

I gave it the preliminary spin,  
 And poured on water (tears it might have been);  
 And when it almost gayly jumped and flowed,  
 A Father-Time-like man got on and rode,  
 Armed with a scythe and spectacles that glowed. 30  
 He turned on will-power to increase the load  
 And slow me down—and I abruptly slowed,  
 Like coming to a sudden railroad station.  
 I changed from hand to hand in desperation.  
 I wondered what machine of ages gone 35  
 This represented an improvement on.  
 For all I knew it may have sharpened spears  
 And arrowheads itself. Much use for years  
 Had gradually worn it an oblate  
 Spheroid that kicked and struggled in its gait, 40  
 Appearing to return me hate for hate;  
 (But I forgive it now as easily  
 As any other boyhood enemy  
 Whose pride has failed to get him anywhere).  
 I wondered who it was the man thought ground— 45  
 The one who held the wheel back or the one  
 Who gave his life to keep it going round?  
 I wondered if he really thought it fair  
 For him to have the say when we were done.  
 Such were the bitter thoughts to which I turned. 50

Not for myself was I so much concerned.  
 Oh no!—although, of course, I could have found  
 A better way to pass the afternoon  
 Than grinding discord out of a grindstone,



And beating insects at their gritty tune. 55  
 Nor was I for the man so much concerned.  
 Once when the grindstone almost jumped its bearing  
 It looked as if he might be badly thrown  
 And wounded on his blade. So far from caring,  
 I laughed inside, and only cranked the faster, 60  
 (It ran as if it wasn't greased but glued);  
 I'd welcome any moderate disaster  
 That might be calculated to postpone  
 What evidently nothing could conclude.  
 The thing that made me more and more afraid 65  
 Was that we'd ground it sharp and hadn't known,  
 And now were only wasting precious blade.  
 And when he raised it dripping once and tried  
 The creepy edge of it with wary touch,  
 And viewed it over his glasses funny-eyed, 70  
 Only disinterestedly to decide  
 It needed a turn more, I could have cried  
 Wasn't there danger of a turn too much?  
 Mightn't we make it worse instead of better?  
 I was for leaving something to the whetter. 75  
 What if it wasn't all it should be? I'd  
 Be satisfied if he'd be satisfied.

1923

## Two Look at Two

Love and forgetting might have carried them  
 A little further up the mountain side  
 With night so near, but not much further up.  
 They must have halted soon in any case  
 With thoughts of the path back, how rough it was 5  
 With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;  
 When they were halted by a tumbled wall  
 With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,  
 Spending what onward impulse they still had  
 In one last look the way they must not go, 10  
 On up the failing path, where, if a stone  
 Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;  
 No footstep moved it. 'This is all,' they sighed,  
 'Good-night to woods.' But not so; there was more.  
 A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them 15  
 Across the wall, as near the wall as they.  
 She saw them in their field, they her in hers.  
 The difficulty of seeing what stood still,

Like some up-ended boulder split in two,  
 Was in her clouded eyes: they saw no fear there. 20  
 She seemed to think that two thus they were safe.  
 Then, as if they were something that, though strange,  
 She could not trouble her mind with too long,  
 She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.  
 'This, then, is all. What more is there to ask?' 25  
 But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.  
 A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them  
 Across the wall as near the wall as they.  
 This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril,  
 Not the same doe come back into her place. 30  
 He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,  
 As if to ask, 'Why don't you make some motion?  
 Or give some sign of life? Because you can't.  
 I doubt if you're as living as you look.'  
 Thus till he had them almost feeling dared 35  
 To stretch a proffering hand—and a spell-breaking.  
 Then he too passed unscared along the wall.  
 Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.  
 'This *must* be all.' It was all. Still they stood,  
 A great wave from it going over them, 40  
 As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor  
 Had made them certain earth returned their love.

1923

### Paul's Wife

To drive Paul<sup>5</sup> out of any lumber camp  
 All that was needed was to say to him,  
 'How is the wife, Paul?'—and he'd disappear.  
 Some said it was because he had no wife,  
 And hated to be twitted on the subject. 5  
 Others because he'd come within a day  
 Or so of having one, and then been jilted.  
 Others because he'd had one once, a good one,  
 Who'd run away with some one else and left him.  
 And others still because he had one now 10  
 He only had to be reminded of,—  
 He was all duty to her in a minute:  
 He had to run right off to look her up,  
 As if to say, 'That's so, how is my wife?  
 I hope she isn't getting into mischief.' 15

5. The origin of the Paul Bunyan stories, considered as legends of the timber country, is still controversial. Frost's

story has legendary flavor and the atmosphere of the French-Canadian border.

No one was anxious to get rid of Paul.  
He'd been the hero of the mountain camps  
Ever since, just to show them, he had slipped  
The bark of a whole tamarack off whole,  
As clean as boys do off a willow twig 20  
To make a willow whistle on a Sunday  
In April by subsiding meadow brooks.  
They seemed to ask him just to see him go,  
'How is the wife, Paul?' and he always went.  
He never stopped to murder anyone 25  
Who asked the question. He just disappeared—  
Nobody knew in what direction,  
Although it wasn't usually long  
Before they heard of him in some new camp,  
The same Paul at the same old feats of logging. 30  
The question everywhere was why should Paul  
Object to being asked a civil question—  
A man you could say almost anything to  
Short of a fighting word. You have the answers.  
And there was one more not so fair to Paul: 35  
That Paul had married a wife not his equal.  
Paul was ashamed of her. To match a hero,  
She would have had to be a heroine;  
Instead of which she was some half-breed squaw.  
But if the story Murphy told was true, 40  
She wasn't anything to be ashamed of.

You know Paul could do wonders. Everyone's  
Heard how he thrashed the horses on a load  
That wouldn't budge until they simply stretched  
Their rawhide harness from the load to camp. 45  
Paul told the boss the load would be all right,  
'The sun will bring your load in'—and it did—  
By shrinking the rawhide to natural length.  
That's what is called a stretcher. But I guess  
The one about his jumping so's to land 50  
With both his feet at once against the ceiling,  
And then land safely right side up again,  
Back on the floor, is fact or pretty near fact.  
Well this is such a yarn. Paul sawed his wife  
Out of a white-pine log. Murphy was there, 55  
And, as you might say, saw the lady born.  
Paul worked at anything in lumbering.  
He'd been hard at it taking boards away  
For—I forget—the last ambitious sawyer  
To want to find out if he couldn't pile 60

The lumber on Paul till Paul begged for mercy.  
 They'd sliced the first slab off a big butt log,  
 And the sawyer had slammed the carriage back  
 To slam end on again against the saw teeth. 65  
 To judge them by the way they caught themselves  
 When they saw what had happened to the log,  
 They must have had a guilty expectation  
 Something was going to go with their slambanging.  
 Something had left a broad black streak of grease  
 On the new wood the whole length of the log 70  
 Except, perhaps, a foot at either end.  
 But when Paul put his finger in the grease,  
 It wasn't grease at all, but a long slot.  
 The log was hollow. They were sawing pine.  
 'First time I ever saw a hollow pine. 75  
 That comes of having Paul around the place.  
 Take it to hell for me,' the sawyer said.  
 Everyone had to have a look at it,  
 And tell Paul what he ought to do about it.  
 (They treated it as his.) 'You take a jack-knife, 80  
 And spread the opening, and you've got a dug-out  
 All dug to go a-fishing in.' To Paul  
 The hollow looked too sound and clean and empty  
 Ever to have housed birds or beasts or bees.  
 'There was no entrance for them to get in by. 85  
 It looked to him like some new kind of hollow  
 He thought he'd *better* take his jack-knife to.  
 So after work that evening he came back  
 And let enough light into it by cutting  
 To see if it was empty. He made out in there 90  
 A slender length of pith, or was it pith?  
 It might have been the skin a snake had cast  
 And left stood up on end inside the tree  
 The hundred years the tree must have been growing  
 More cutting and he had this in both hands, 95  
 And, looking from it to the pond near by,  
 Paul wondered how it would respond to water.  
 Not a breeze stirred, but just the breath of air  
 He made in walking slowly to the beach  
 Blew it once off his hands and almost broke it. 100  
 He laid it at the edge where it could drink.  
 At the first drink it rustled and grew limp.  
 At the next drink it grew invisible.  
 Paul dragged the shallows for it with his fingers,  
 And thought it must have melted. It was gone. 105

And then beyond the open water, dim with midges,  
 Where the log drive lay pressed against the boom,  
 It slowly rose a person, rose a girl,<sup>6</sup>  
 Her wet hair heavy on her like a helmet,  
 Who, leaning on a log looked back at Paul. 110  
 And that made Paul in turn look back  
 To see if it was anyone behind him  
 That she was looking at instead of him.  
 Murphy had been there watching all the time,  
 But from a shed where neither of them could see him. 115  
 There was a moment of suspense in birth  
 When the girl seemed too water-logged to live,  
 Before she caught her first breath with a gasp  
 And laughed. Then she climbed slowly to her feet,  
 And walked off talking to herself or Paul 120  
 Across the logs like backs of alligators,  
 Paul taking after her around the pond.

Next evening Murphy and some other fellows  
 Got drunk, and tracked the pair up Catamount,  
 From the bare top of which there is a view 125  
 To other hills across a kettle valley.  
 And there, well after dark, let Murphy tell it,  
 They saw Paul and his creature keeping house.  
 It was the only glimpse that anyone  
 Has had of Paul and her since Murphy saw them 130  
 Falling in love across the twilight mill-pond.  
 More than a mile across the wilderness  
 They sat together half-way up a cliff  
 In a small niche let into it, the girl  
 Brightly, as if a star played on the place, 135  
 Paul darkly, like her shadow. All the light  
 Was from the girl herself, though, not from a star,  
 As was apparent from what happened next.  
 All those great ruffians put their throats together,  
 And let out a loud yell, and threw a bottle, 140  
 As a brute tribute of respect to beauty.  
 Of course the bottle fell short by a mile,  
 But the shout reached the girl and put her light out.  
 She went out like a firefly, and that was all.

So there were witnesses that Paul was married, 145  
 And not to anyone to be ashamed of.  
 Everyone had been wrong in judging Paul.  
 Murphy told me Paul put on all those airs

6. Note the analogy with the nymphs and dryads of classical mythology.

About his wife to keep her to himself.  
 Paul was what's called a terrible possessor. 150  
 Owning a wife with him meant owning her.  
 She wasn't anybody else's business,  
 Either to praise her, or so much as name her,  
 And he'd thank people not to think of her.  
 Murphy's idea was that a man like Paul 155  
 Wouldn't be spoken to about a wife  
 In any way the world knew how to speak.

1923

## West-running Brook

'Fred, where is north?'

'North? North is there, my love.

The brook runs west.'

'West-running Brook then call it.'

(West-running Brook men call it to this day.)  
 'What does it think it's doing running west  
 When all the other country brooks flow east 5  
 To reach the ocean? It must be the brook  
 Can trust itself to go by contraries  
 The way I can with you—and you with me—  
 Because we're—we're—I don't know what we are.  
 What are we?'

'Young or new?'

'We must be something. 10

We've said we two. Let's change that to we three.  
 As you and I are married to each other,  
 We'll both be married to the brook. We'll build  
 Our bridge across it, and the bridge shall be  
 Our arm thrown over it asleep beside it. 15  
 Look, look, it's waving to us with a wave  
 To let us know it hears me.'

'Why, my dear,  
 That wave's been standing off this jut of shore—'  
 (The black stream, catching on a sunken rock,  
 Flung backward on itself in one white wave, 20  
 And the white water rode the black forever,  
 Not gaining but not losing, like a bird  
 White feathers from the struggle of whose breast  
 Flecked the dark stream and flecked the darker pool

Below the point, and were at last driven wrinkled  
 In a white scarf against the far shore alders.) 25  
 'That wave's been standing off this jut of shore  
 Ever since rivers, I was going to say,  
 Were made in heaven. It wasn't waved to us.'

'It wasn't, yet it was. If not to you  
 It was to me—in an annunciation.' 30

'Oh, if you take it off to lady-land,  
 As't were the country of the Amazons  
 We men must see you to the confines of  
 And leave you there, ourselves forbid to enter,— 35  
 It is your brook! I have no more to say.'

'Yes, you have, too. Go on. You thought of something.'

'Speaking of contraries, see how the brook  
 In that white wave runs counter to itself.  
 It is from that in water we were from 40  
 Long, long before we were from any creature.  
 Here we, in our impatience of the steps,  
 Get back to the beginning of beginnings,  
 The stream of everything that runs away.  
 Some say existence like a Pirouet 45  
 And Pirouette, forever in one place,  
 Stands still and dances, but it runs away,  
 It seriously, sadly, runs away  
 To fill the abyss' void with emptiness.  
 It flows beside us in this water brook, 50  
 But it flows over us. It flows between us  
 To separate us for a panic moment.  
 It flows between us, over us, and *with* us.  
 And it is time, strength, tone, light, life and love—  
 And even substance lapsing unsubstantial; 55  
 The universal cataract of death  
 That spends to nothingness—and unresisted,  
 Save by some strange resistance in itself,  
 Not just a swerving, but a throwing back,  
 As if regret were in it and were sacred. 60  
 It has this throwing backward on itself  
 So that the fall of most of it is always  
 Raising a little, sending up a little.  
 Our life runs down in sending up the clock.  
 The brook runs down in sending up our life. 65  
 The sun runs down in sending up the brook.  
 And there is something sending up the sun.

It is this backward motion toward the source,  
 Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,  
 The tribute of the current to the source. 70  
 It is from this in nature we are from.  
 It is most us.'

'Today will be the day  
 You said so.'

'No, today will be the day  
 You said the brook was called West-running Brook.'

'Today will be the day of what we both said.' 75  
 1928

### Tree at My Window

Tree at my window, window tree,  
 My sash is lowered when night comes on;  
 But let there never be curtain drawn  
 Between you and me.

Vague dream-head lifted out of the ground, 5  
 And thing next most diffuse to cloud,  
 Not all your light tongues talking aloud  
 Could be profound.

But tree, I have seen you taken and tossed,  
 And if you have seen me when I slept, 10  
 You have seen me when I was taken and swept  
 And all but lost.

That day she put our heads together,  
 Fate had her imagination about her,  
 Your head so much concerned with outer, 15  
 Mine with inner, weather.

1928

### Sand Dunes

Sea waves are green and wet,  
 But up from where they die,  
 Rise others vaster yet,  
 And those are brown and dry.

They are the sea made land<sup>7</sup> 5  
 To come at the fisher town,

7. The land is also sea-made; for other dual references see Note 3, p. 1146.



And bury in solid sand  
The men she could not drown.

She may know cove and cape,  
But she does not know mankind  
If by any change of shape,  
She hopes to cut off mind. 10

Men left her a ship to sink:  
They can leave her a hut as well;  
And be but more free to think  
For the one more cast-off shell. 15

1928

### Spring Pools

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect  
The total sky almost without defect,  
And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,  
Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,  
And yet not out by any brook or river,  
But up by roots to bring dark foliage on. 5

The trees that have it in their pent-up buds  
To darken nature and be summer woods—  
Let them think twice before they use their powers  
To blot out and drink up and sweep away  
These flowery waters and these watery flowers  
From snow that melted only yesterday. 10

1928

### Departmental

An ant on the table cloth  
Ran into a dormant moth  
Of many times his size.  
He showed not the least surprise.  
His business wasn't with such. 5  
He gave it scarcely a touch,  
And was off on his duty run.  
Yet if he encountered one  
Of the hive's enquiry squad  
Whose work is to find out God 10  
And the nature of time and space,  
He would put him onto the case.

Ants are a curious race;  
 One crossing with hurried tread  
 The body of one of their dead 15  
 Isn't given a moment's arrest—  
 Seems not even impressed.  
 But he no doubt reports to any  
 With whom he crosses antennae,  
 And they no doubt report 20  
 To the higher up at court.  
 Then word goes forth in Formic:<sup>8</sup>  
 'Death's come to Jerry McCormic,  
 Our selfless forager Jerry.  
 Will the special Janizary<sup>9</sup> 25  
 Whose office it is to bury  
 The dead of the commissary  
 Go bring him home to his people.  
 Lay him in state on a sepal.  
 Wrap him for shroud in a petal. 30  
 Embalm him with ichor of nettle.  
 This is the word of your Queen.'  
 And presently on the scene  
 Appears a solemn mortician;  
 And taking formal position 35  
 With feelers calmly atwiddle,  
 Seizes the dead by the middle,  
 And heaving him high in air,  
 Carries him out of there.  
 No one stands round to stare. 40  
 It is nobody else's affair.  
 It couldn't be called ungentle.  
 But how thoroughly departmental.

1936

### Come In

As I came to the edge of the woods,  
 Thrush music—hark!  
 Now if it was dusk outside,  
 Inside it was dark.  
 Too dark in the woods for a bird 5  
 By sleight of wing  
 To better its perch for the night,  
 Though it still could sing.

8. The family of ants is called the *Formicidae*.

9. A member of the special troops assigned to Turkish sovereigns.

*Choose Something Like a Star* · 1295

The last of the light of the sun  
That had died in the west 10  
Still lived for one song more  
In a thrush's breast.

Far in the pillared dark  
Thrush music went—  
Almost like a call to come in 15  
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars:  
I would not come in.  
I meant not even if asked,  
And I hadn't been. 20

1942

*Choose Something Like a Star*

O Star (the fairest one in sight),  
We grant your loftiness the right  
To some obscurity of cloud—  
It will not do to say of night,  
Since dark is what brings out your light. 5  
Some mystery becomes the proud.  
But to be wholly taciturn  
In your reserve is not allowed.  
Say something to us we can learn  
By heart and when alone repeat. 10  
Say something! And it says "I burn."  
But say with what degree of heat.  
Talk Fahrenheit, talk Centigrade.  
Use language we can comprehend.  
Tell us what elements you blend. 15  
It gives us strangely little aid,  
But does tell something in the end.  
And steadfast as Keats' Eremite,<sup>1</sup>  
Not even stooping from its sphere,  
It asks a little of us here. 20  
It asks of us a certain height,  
So when at times the mob is swayed  
To carry praise or blame too far,  
We may choose something like a star  
To stay our minds on and be staid. 25

1947

1. *Cf.* Keats's sonnet "Bright Star! Would I Were Steadfast As Thou Art."

## CARL SANDBURG

(1878-)

Carl Sandburg's parents were Swedish immigrants, living at Galesburg, Illinois, when the boy was born on January 6, 1878. The father was then working on a railroad construction crew. They were a healthy and affectionate family, though very poor. At thirteen, Sandburg was obliged to leave school and go to work. For a time he found employment in Galesburg; then he became a migratory laborer, roaming from job to job in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado. He was at various times a milkman, a harvest hand, a hotel dishwasher, a barbershop porter, a stage hand, a brickmaker, and a sign painter. For a while he was a salesman of stereoscopes and the popular stereoscopic views of the day—a profitable employment and a good education for a poet of the people. In 1898, at the age of twenty, he settled again in Galesburg to follow the trade of house painter, but the Spanish-American War excited his interest and he enlisted in the Army. During active service in Puerto Rico he functioned as correspondent for the Galesburg *Evening Mail*, his first newspaper connection.

In eight months he was back in Galesburg, determined to secure a higher education. He had been reading hard with this in view, and he was provisionally admitted at Lombard College, although he might have preferred Knox, across town, where Lincoln had met Douglas in one of

the famous debates of 1858. Young Sandburg had a good scholastic record, made a serious beginning with his writing, and became a local celebrity at basketball, but he did not graduate. A few weeks before the end of his senior year, in 1902, with all his record clear, he simply disappeared from the scene. For several years he lived as a roving newspaper reporter. In 1907 he secured an editorial position on a small Chicago paper, and made a connection which led him to Wisconsin as political organizer for the Social Democrats, a reform party, in 1908. That year he married Lillian Steichen, sister of the famous artist-photographer Edward Steichen (of whom the poet published a pleasing biography in 1929). The young writer, aged thirty, now sought to establish the more settled pattern that befits a well-married man. In 1910 he secured appointment as secretary to the mayor of Milwaukee, and served for two years. But he was not interested in a political career. He was a writer, already the master of his trade as a journalist, although his few poems, published here and there in newspapers, did not suggest that he had found a subject or a satisfactory poetic form. He served for a year on the editorial staff of the liberal Milwaukee *Leader*. The next year, in 1913, he went to Chicago on an editorial engagement, and soon he became illustrious among the writers

who were fostering a new literature in that city.

The first of Sandburg's poems in his characteristic and now familiar style was "Chicago," which appeared, in 1914, in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. The *Chicago Poems* of 1916 was followed by *Cornhuskers* in 1918. That year Sandburg spent some months in Sweden as correspondent for a Chicago newspaper syndicate, and returned as editorial writer on the *Chicago Daily News*, a paper of national prominence. He remained with that paper for fifteen years as editorialist, feature writer, and columnist, retiring in 1933 under pressure of his private literary interests.

By 1920, when the "renaissance" of American literature was gaining momentum, Sandburg had reached the maturity of his power as a poet. He had twice been recognized by national awards, and his next volume, *Smoke and Steel* (1920), confirmed his position as the poet of the common man confronted with the complexities of the new industrial civilization. He began to give frequent public readings of his own poems, and soon emerged as the foremost minstrel of his time by adding to his programs the performance of American folk songs which he had long been collecting in his journeys about the country. He popularized the folk ballad before the radio became an important medium for his successors. His collection, *The American Songbag* (1927, revised and enlarged 1950), the first popular compilation of the sort, was enriched by his instinct

for the genuine and his scholarly knowledge of this field. These qualities passed into his own poems, from *Slabs of the Sunburnt West* (1922) to *The People, Yes* (1936). The latter is a very knowing arrangement of American folk speech, folkways, and customs, interpreted in language that sensitively combines the flavor of the original with Sandburg's poetic perceptions.

Two other aspects of his career are noteworthy. His books for children began with *Rootabaga Stories* (1922), to be followed in 1923 by *Rootabaga Pigeons* and in 1930 by *Potato Face* and *Early Moon*. The prose stories in these collections are at a high level, but the poems especially take their place in the distinguished literature of childhood. More important is his *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (1926), a classic of biography both for its style, and for the literary tact which enabled him to remain faithful to the historical record of Lincoln without losing the American significance of the legendary Lincoln. During the next thirteen years, much of his spare time was devoted to the historical study that prepared him to complete his task in 1939, in the four volumes of *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. He concentrated his knowledge of the subject in the one-volume *Abraham Lincoln* of 1954, an authoritative and powerful study.

Sandburg has also published several books of a topical nature. He is author or coauthor of three volumes of Lincoln studies. Dur-

ing the second World War, he published his commentary on events of the time in *Storm over the Land* (1942) and *Home Front Memo* (1943). His one novel, *Remembrance Rock* (1950), is a fictional survey of American history from the colonial period. His considerable influence on the national culture has been recognized by the award of many honorary degrees and the accolades of learned and literary academics.

His *Complete Poems*, published in 1950, gave perspective to an accomplishment of great spiritual value to his generation. When he first became known, he was hailed as an interesting and vigorous curiosity, a journalist of poetry, the form of his verse being regarded as at most an external device. Now he can be seen as a truly gifted poet who gave shape and

permanence to the phrases, rhythms, and symbols of the American popular idiom, while embodying the common idealism of the people in forms often of notable subtlety. He has fulfilled Whitman's prescription for the poet—"that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it."

There is no complete collection of Sandburg's work. The standard text of the poems is *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg*, 1950. The earlier volumes have been named in the text above. The *Selected Poems of Carl Sandburg*, edited by Rebecca West in 1926, contains a good selection to that date and a valuable critical introduction by the editor.

There is no definitive biography. Karl Detzer's *Carl Sandburg: A Study in Personality and Background*, 1941, is informative and critically sound. Carl Sandburg's autobiographical account, *Always the Young Strangers*, 1952, is of course authoritative in respect to biographical data as far as it goes, and illuminating for the student of Sandburg's personality.

## Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard

Stuff of the moon  
Runs on the lapping sand  
Out to the longest shadows.  
Under the curving willows,  
And round the creep of the wave line,  
Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters  
Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.

1916

## Monotone

The monotone of the rain is beautiful,  
And the sudden rise and slow relapse  
Of the long multitudinous rain.

The sun on the hills is beautiful,  
Or a captured sunset sea-flung, 5  
Bannered with fire and gold.

A face I know is beautiful—  
With fire and gold of sky and sea,  
And the peace of long warm rain.

1910

1916

## Gone

Everybody loved Chick Lorimer in our town.  
Far off  
Everybody loved her.  
So we all love a wild girl keeping a hold  
On a dream she wants. 5  
Nobody knows now where Chick Lorimer went.  
Nobody knows why she packed her trunk . . . a few old things  
And is gone,  
Gone with her little chin  
'Thrust ahead of her 10  
And her soft hair blowing careless  
From under a wide hat,  
Dancer, singer, a laughing passionate lover.  
Were there ten men or a hundred hunting Chick?  
Were there five men or fifty with aching hearts? 15  
Everybody loved Chick Lorimer.  
Nobody knows where she's gone.

1916

## I'ish Crier

I know a Jew fish crier down on Maxwell Street<sup>1</sup> with a voice like a  
north wind blowing over corn stubble in January.  
He dangles herring before prospective customers evincing a joy  
identical with that of Pavlova<sup>2</sup> dancing.  
His face is that of a man terribly glad to be selling fish, terribly  
glad that God made fish, and customers to whom he may call  
his wares from a pushcart.

1916

1. Then a congested, poor district of Chicago.

2. Anna Pavlova, the Russian dancer,

first appeared in the United States in 1911 and was an immediate popular favorite.

## A Fence

Now the stone house on the lake front is finished and the workmen  
are beginning the fence.

The palings are made of iron bars with steel points that can stab the  
life out of any man who falls on them.

As a fence, it is a masterpiece, and will shut off the rabble and all  
vagabonds and hungry men and all wandering children looking  
for a place to play.

Passing through the bars and over the steel points will go nothing  
except Death and the Rain and To-morrow.

1913

1916

## Loam

In the loam we sleep,  
In the cool moist loam,  
In the lull of years that pass  
And the break of stars,

From the loam, then,  
The soft warm loam,

5

We rise:  
To shape of rose leaf,  
Of face and shoulder.

We stand, then,  
To a whiff of life,  
Lifted to the silver of the sun  
Over and out of the loam  
A day.

10

1918

## Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz<sup>3</sup> and Waterloo.  
Shovel them under and let me work—  
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg  
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.  
Shovel them under and let me work.

5

3. The places named in the poem were all scenes of great battles in major wars: the Napoleonic Wars, the Civil War, and World War I.



Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:  
What place is this?  
Where are we now?

I am the grass. 10  
Let me work.

1918

### Southern Pacific

Huntington<sup>4</sup> sleeps in a house six feet long.  
Huntington dreams of railroads he built and owned.  
Huntington dreams of ten thousand men saying: Yes, sir.

Blithery sleeps in a house six feet long.  
Blithery dreams of rails and ties he laid. 5  
Blithery dreams of saying to Huntington: Yes, sir.

Huntington,  
Blithery, sleep in houses six feet long.  
1918

### Washerwoman

The washerwoman is a member of the Salvation Army.  
And over the tub of suds rubbing underwear clean  
She sings that Jesus will wash her sins away  
And the red wrongs she has done God and man  
Shall be white as driven snow. 5  
Rubbing underwear she sings of the Last Great Washday.  
1918

### Prayers of Steel

Lay me on an anvil, O God.  
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.  
Let me pry loose old walls.  
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God. 5  
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.  
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.

4. Collis P. Huntington (1821-1900), early California financier, promoter and later president (1890) of the Southern Pacific and Central Pacific railroads.

Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.  
 Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights  
 into white stars.

1918

### Stars, Songs, Faces

Gather the stars if you wish it so.  
 Gather the songs and keep them.  
 Gather the faces of women.  
 Gather for keeping years and years.

And then . . .

Loosen your hands, let go and say good-by.  
 Let the stars and songs go.  
 Let the faces and years go.  
 Loosen your hands and say good-by.

1920

### Broken-face Gargoyles

All I can give you is broken-face gargoyles.<sup>5</sup>

It is too early to sing and dance at funerals,

Though I can whisper to you I am looking for an undertaker humming a lullaby and throwing his feet in a swift and mystic buck-and-wing,<sup>6</sup> now you see it and now you don't.

Fish to swim a pool in your garden flashing a speckled silver,  
 A basket of wine-saps filling your room with flame-dark for your eyes and the tang of valley orchards for your nose, 5

Such a beautiful pail of fish, such a beautiful peck of apples, I cannot bring you now.

It is too early and I am not footloose yet.

I shall come in the night when I come with a hammer and saw.

I shall come near your window, where you look out when your eyes open in the morning,

And there I shall slam together bird-houses and bird-baths for wing-loose wrens and hummers<sup>7</sup> to live in, birds with yellow wing tips to blur and buzz soft all summer, 10

So I shall make little fool homes with doors, always open doors for all and each to run away when they want to.

5. Rainspouts, usually at the roof level, and in old cathedrals and cloisters often carved as grotesque animal or human figures.

6. A Negro clog dance employing a mimicry of bird flight.

7. Hummingbirds.

I shall come just like that even though now it is early and I am not  
yet footloose,

Even though I am still looking for an undertaker with a raw, wind-  
bitten face and a dance in his feet.

I make a date with you (put it down) for six o'clock in the evening  
a thousand years from now.

All I can give you now is broken-face gargoyles.

15

All I can give you now is a double gorilla head with two fish mouths  
and four eagle eyes hooked on a street wall, spouting water and  
looking two ways to the ends of the street for the new people,  
the young strangers, coming, coming, always coming.

It is early.

I shall yet be footloose.

1920

### On a Railroad Right of Way

Stream, go hide yourself.

In the tall grass, in the cat-tails,

In the browns of autumn, the last purple asters, the yellow whispers.

On the moss rock levels leave the marks of your wave-lengths.

Sing in your gravel, in your clean gully.

5

Let the moaning railroad trains go by.

Till they stop you, go on with your song.

The minnies<sup>8</sup> spin in the water gravel,

In the spears of the early autumn sun.

There must be winter fish.

10

Babies, you will be jumping fish

In the first snow month.

1928

### From The People, Yes<sup>9</sup>

The people will live on.

The learning and blundering people will live on.

They will be tricked and sold and again sold

And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,

The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,

5

You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.

The mammoth rests between his cyclonic dramas.

8. Minnows.

9. These lines comprise Section 107, the

concluding passage of *The People, Yes*.

1304 · *Carl Sandburg*

The people so often sleepy, weary, enigmatic,  
is a vast huddle with many units saying:

"I earn my living.

30

I make enough to get by  
and it takes all my time.

If I had more time

I could do more for myself  
and maybe for others.

35

I could read and study  
and talk things over  
and find out about things.

It takes time.

I wish I had the time."

40

The people is a tragic and comic two-face: hero and hoodlum:  
phantom and gorilla twisting to moan with a gargoyle mouth:  
"They buy me and sell me . . . it's a game . . . sometime I'll  
break loose . . ."

Once having marched  
Over the margins of animal necessity,  
Over the grim line of sheer subsistence

Then man came

45

To the deeper rituals of his bones,  
To the lights lighter than any bones,  
To the time for thinking things over,  
To the dance, the song, the story,  
Or the hours given over to dreaming,

50

Once having so marched.

Between the finite limitations of the five senses  
and the endless yearnings of man for the beyond  
the people hold to the humdrum bidding of work and food  
while reaching out when it comes their way  
for lights beyond the prison of the five senses,  
for keepsakes lasting beyond any hunger or death.

55

This reaching is alive.

The panderers and liars have violated and smutted it.

Yet this reaching is alive yet  
for lights and keepsakes.

60

The people know the salt of the sea  
and the strength of the winds  
lashing the corners of the earth.

The people take the earth  
as a tomb of rest and a cradle of hope.

65

Who else speaks for the Family of Man?

They are in tune and step  
 with constellations of universal law.  
 The people is a polychrome, 50  
 a spectrum and a prism  
 held in a moving monolith,  
 a console organ of changing themes,  
 a clavilux<sup>1</sup> of color poems  
 wherein the sea offers fog 55  
 and the fog moves off in rain  
 and the labrador sunset shortens  
 to a nocturne of clear stars  
 serene over the shot spray  
 of northern lights. 60

The steel mill sky is alive.  
 The fire breaks white and zigzag  
 shot on a gun-metal gloaming.  
 Man is a long time coming.  
 Man will yet win. 65  
 Brother may yet line up with brother:

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers.  
 There are men who can't be bought.  
 The fireborn are at home in fire.  
 The stars make no noise. 70  
 You can't hinder the wind from blowing.  
 Time is a great teacher.  
 Who can live without hope?

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief  
 the people march. 75  
 In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for keeps, the people  
 march:  
 "Where to? what next?"

1936

1. A sort of organ which simultaneously produces music and projects colors on a screen.

## VACHEL LINDSAY

(1879-1931)

Among the three vigorous poets who established the importance of the Midwest in the twentieth-century revival of our literature, Vachel Lindsay was the earliest to excite the enthusiasm of

American readers. Before Edgar Lee Masters had published *Spoon River Anthology* (1915) or Carl Sandburg had collected his *Chicago Poems* (1916), Lindsay was known as the author of two volumes, *General William Booth Enters into Heaven and Other Poems* (1913) and *The Congo and Other Poems* (1914). The title poems had each won wide attention when previously published in the new Chicago periodical *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*; now the volumes as a whole confirmed the first impression of a fluent power and radical originality.

In one way Lindsay was traditional—he did not follow the dominant tendency toward free verse, already announced by the imagists and soon to be accelerated by the influence of Sandburg, Masters, and many lesser poets. Lindsay's innovations in form occurred within a traditional and primitive convention, that of the folk ballad. However, he heightened its rhythmic character and its violence. Kipling and his fellow balladists of the Victorian period had restored to popularity the rhythm of marching feet, but Vachel's people "stomped," or "pounded on the table \* \* \* hard as they were able." Perhaps this was a rhythm no more American than African, but certainly it recalled the frontier. Lindsay conceived of poetry in terms of minstrelsy, and asserted that it was not alive until it was audible. "The higher vaudeville," he called it, and as a popular public reader of his own poems he made a spectacular demonstration of what he meant. Seeking to express his

country in her characteristic rhythms, he took them from hymns and circuses, from the Negro, from the buffalo, from the cattle and the automobiles of the Santa Fé Trail, from childhood songs and games, and from country dancing—wherever he found them rich and characteristic. Less noticed at the time, but much appreciated by later critics, was his experimentation with more subtle rhythms, as in his poem games for children, and the fantasy of "The Chinese Nightingale."

Christened Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, he was born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1879, of parents who represented Kentucky and Indiana pioneer stock, an agrarian philosophy, and the evangelical fervor of the Campbellites. The followers of Alexander Campbell, later called the Disciples of Christ, were then a fundamentalist sect, of an intense moral earnestness expressed in concepts of social Christianity and of mystical redemption. Lindsay deeply absorbed these attitudes in boyhood; later his personal mysticism drew him toward Swedenborgianism. The social idealism which permeates his writing is impractical and millennial to a degree which brought him ridicule from the beginning, but it was supported by the midwest evangelism that he found in Springfield and in rural Indiana, where he spent many summers on his grandparents' farm. As he grew up in Lincoln's city, the American myth of the Great Emancipator took hold of him, and became associated with the ideals of Jackson and the "common man" and

with what he understood to be the American idealism of Walt Whitman. For more recent political ideals he turned to such figures as John P. Altgeld, the liberal leader of Illinois, and William Jennings Bryan, "the great commoner," a crusading leader of midwest agrarian and evangelical idealism.

After three years at Hiram College in Ohio, Lindsay was unable to feel the vocation for the ministry for which his parents had hoped; instead, he wanted desperately to be an artist, and his drawings indicate a certain ability, especially for fanciful design. His failure to fulfill parental expectations is suggested as one origin of the sense of guilt which followed him for years, and disastrously influenced his personality. From 1900 to 1905 he studied art, for the first four years at the Chicago Art Institute, and then in New York, while supporting himself meagerly by part-time employment; however, he found no market for his work.

It was then that he decided upon a career of literary evangelism, and proposed to prepare himself by going among the people. From 1908 to 1912 he made a number of walking tours in various rural areas, including the Midwest, the Southwest, and the highlands of Pennsylvania. On early tours he went as a mendicant minstrel, as suggested by the titles of *Rhymes to Be Traded for Bread* (1912) and *A Handy Guide for Beggars* (1916), the latter an attractive addition to the literature of vagabondage. He also made tours and taught classes for the

Y.M.C.A. and the Anti-Saloon League. His attitude toward these excursions in practical idealism is reflected in his early prose testament, *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* (1914), and in *The Golden Book of Springfield* (1920), a misty fantasy of a utopian society.

In 1913 Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*, published his poem on General William Booth, and began to promote the author as her magazine's first important find. Her encouragement swept him on to the triumph of his first two volumes of poetry, already described; and her connections opened the way for him to gain an audience for his poetry recitals. The value of his poems, and his dramatic reading of such selections as "The Congo" and "The Santa-Fé Trail" did the rest. Not even the fairly good recordings of his readings will give a younger generation the full sense of his spectacularity before an audience, for he really performed the poems with dramatic chant and gesture, supplemented by awkward and ingenuous earnestness.

But his effective career was short. His third volume, *The Chinese Nightingale and Other Poems* (1917) contained as the title poem one of his best works, and two others equally admired, "The Ghost of the Buffaloes" and "In Praise of Johnny Appleseed." It was the pinnacle of his career. *The Daniel Jaz and Other Poems* and *The Golden Whales of California*, both published in 1920, mark the beginning of a decline. His *Collected Poems* (1923) does not suffer

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greatly by the absence of the contents of his four later volumes, published from 1926 to 1929.

The facts of Lindsay's last years are variously reported. It is certain that his physical energies declined, and that he was discouraged at his inability to find new inspiration or to repeat his successes on the old ground. In 1931, in a fit of despondency, Lindsay took his own life.

There has been no complete edition of Lindsay's works. *Collected Poems by*

*Vachel Lindsay*, 1923, revised and illustrated 1925, brings together the volumes named in the text above, including those of 1920 and two prefatory essays of some critical interest. Subsequent volumes of poems are *Going-to-the-Stars*, 1926; *The Candle in the Cabin*, 1926; *Johnny Appleseed and Other Poems*, 1928; and *Every Soul Is a Circus*, 1929. *Selected Poems of Vachel Lindsay*, edited by H. Spencer, 1931, is a good collection. The noteworthy prose of Lindsay has been mentioned in the text above, except for *The Litany of Washington Street*, 1929.

Biographical studies are A. E. Trombly, *Lindsay, Adventurer*, 1929; Edgar Lee Masters, *Vachel Lindsay: A Poet in America*, 1935; Mark Harris, *City of Discontent* \* \* \*, 1952; and Eleanor Ruggles, *The West-Going Heart*, 1959.

### The Eagle That Is Forgotten

(JOHN P. ALTGELD.<sup>1</sup> BORN DECEMBER 30, 1847; DIED  
MARCH 12, 1902.)

Sleep softly . . . eagle forgotten . . . under the stone.

Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.

"We have buried him now," thought your foes, and in secret rejoiced.

They made a brave show of their mourning, their hatred unvoiced.  
They had snarled at you, barked at you, foamed at you day after day.

Now you were ended. They praised you, . . . and laid you away.

The others that mourned you in silence and terror and truth,  
The widow bereft of her crust, and the boy without youth,  
The mocked and scorned and the wounded, the lame and the poor  
That should have remembered forever, . . . remember no more.

Where are those lovers of yours, on what name do they call

The lost, that in armies wept over your funeral pall?

They call on the names of a hundred high-valiant ones;

A hundred white eagles have risen the sons of your sons;

The zeal in their wings is a zeal that your dreaming began,

The valor that wore out your soul in the service of man.

1. John Peter Altgeld, German-born liberal political leader of Illinois, was defeated in his campaign for re-election as governor in 1896 because he had pardoned three men who had been convicted as the supposed leaders of the violent Haymarket Riot (1886), and

because he had bitterly resisted President Cleveland's action in breaking the Pullman strike (1894) by sending federal troops to Chicago. Lindsay was seventeen when Altgeld was defeated, and he venerated his memory as a friend of the oppressed.



Sleep softly, . . . eagle forgotten, . . . under the stone,  
 Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.  
 Sleep on, O brave-hearted, O wise man, that kindled the flame—  
 To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name, 20  
 To live in mankind, far, far, more . . . than to live in a name.

1913

## General William Booth Enters into Heaven<sup>2</sup>

(To be sung to the tune of "The Blood of the Lamb"  
 with indicated instruments)

### I

(*Bass drum beaten loudly.*)

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum—  
 (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
 The Saints smiled gravely and they said: "He's come."  
 (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
 Walking lepers followed, rank on rank, 5  
 Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,  
 Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale—  
 Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail:—  
 Vermin-eaten saints with moldy breath,  
 Unwashed legions with the ways of Death— 10  
 (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

(*Banjos.*)

Every slum had sent its half-a-score  
 The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)  
 Every banner that the wide world flies  
 Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes. 15  
 Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang,  
 Tranced, fanatical they shrieked and sang:—  
 "Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"  
 Hallelujah! It was queer to see  
 Bull-necked convicts with that land make free. 20  
 Loons with trumpets blowed a blare, blare, blare  
 On, on upward thro' the golden air!  
 (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

2. This poem, published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* for January, 1913, first brought Lindsay into prominence; and it became the title poem for his first important volume, also published in 1913. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, had died the year be-

fore, internationally known through the work of his Army. The musical instruments, the hymns, and the biblical language echoed in the poem, were familiarly identified with the street-corner evangelism of Booth's organization.

## II

*(Bass drum slower and softer.)*

Booth died blind and still by faith he trod,  
 Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God. 25  
 Booth led boldly, and he looked the chief  
 Eagle countenance in sharp relief,  
 Beard a-flying, air of high command  
 Unabated in that holy land.

*(Sweet flute music.)*

Jesus came from out the court-house door, 30  
 Stretched his hands above the passing poor.  
 Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there  
 Round and round the mighty court-house square.  
 Then, in an instant all that blear review  
 Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new. 35  
 The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled  
 And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world.

*(Bass drum louder.)*

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!  
 Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl!  
 Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean, 40  
 Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

*(Grand chorus of all instruments. Tambourines to the foreground.)*

The hosts were sandalled, and their wings were fire!  
 (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
 But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir.  
 (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?) 45  
 Oh, shout Salvation! It was good to see  
 Kings and Princes by the Lamb set free.  
 The banjos rattled and the tambourines  
 Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens.

*(Reverently sung, no instruments.)*

And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer 50  
 He saw his Master thro' the flag-filled air.  
 Christ came gently with a robe and crown  
 For Booth the soldier, while the throng knelt down.  
 He saw King Jesus. They were face to face, 55  
 And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.  
 Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight<sup>3</sup>

(IN SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS)

It is portentous, and a thing of state  
That here at midnight, in our little town  
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,  
Near the old court-house pacing up and down,

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards 5  
He lingers where his children used to play,  
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones  
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,  
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl 10  
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,  
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.  
He is among us:—as in times before!  
And we who toss and lie awake for long 15  
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings.  
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?  
Too many peasants fight, they know not why,  
Too many homesteads in black terror weep. 20

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.  
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.  
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now  
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn 25  
Shall come;—the shining hope of Europe free:  
The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,  
Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp and Sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,  
That all his hours of travail here for men 30  
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace  
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

1914

3. The poem appeared in the *Independent* for September, 1914, a month after the German invasion of Belgium. It was

collected in a section of poems concerning that crisis, in the *Congo* volume, also published in 1914.

## The Santa-Fé Trail<sup>4</sup> (A Humoresque)

(I asked the old negro: "What is that bird that sings so well?" He answered: "That is the Rachel-Jane." "Hasn't it another name—lark, or thrush, or the like?" "No. Jus' Rachel-Jane.")

### I. In Which a Racing Auto Comes from the East

This is the order of the music of the morning:—  
 First, from the far East comes but a crooning.  
 The crooning turns to a sunrise singing.  
 Hark to the *calm-horn*, *balm-horn*, *psalm-horn*.  
 Hark to the *faint-horn*, *quaint-horn*, *saint-horn*. . . . 5

Hark to the *pace-horn*, *chase-horn*, *race-horn*.  
 And the holy veil of the dawn has gone.  
 Swiftly the brazen car comes on.  
 It burns in the East as the sunrise burns.  
 I see great flashes where the far trail turns. 10  
 Its eyes are lamps like the eyes of dragons.  
 It drinks gasoline from big red flagons.  
 Butting through the delicate mists of the morning,  
 It comes like lightning, goes past roaring.  
 It will hail all the windmills, taunting, ringing, 15  
 Dodge the cyclones,  
 Count the milestones,  
 On through the ranges the prairie-dog tills—  
 Scooting past the cattle on the thousand hills. . . .

Ho for the *tear-horn*, *scare-horn*, *dare-horn*,  
 Ho for the *gay-horn*, *bark-horn*, *bay-horn*.  
 Ho for Kansas, land that restores us  
 When houses choke us, and great books bore us!  
 Sunrise Kansas, harvesters' Kansas,  
 A million men have found you before us. 25  
 A million men have found you before us.

*To be sung delicately, to an improvised tune.*

*To be sung or read with great speed.*

*To be read or sung in a rolling bass, with some deliberation.*

### II. In Which Many Autos Pass Westward

I want live things in their pride to remain.  
 I will not kill one grasshopper vain  
 Though he eats a hole in my shirt like a door.  
 I let him out, give him one chance more. 30  
 Perhaps, while he gnaws my hat in his whim,  
 Grasshopper lyrics occur to him.

*In an even, deliberate, narrative manner.*

4. The Santa Fe Trail, from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, after about 1820 became a principal avenue to the Southwest, successively as cattle trail, trade route, rail-

road route, and automobile road. The poem was published in the *Congo* volume (1914), representing, like "The Congo," Lindsay's experiments with poetry "to be read aloud or chanted."

I am a tramp by the long trail's border,  
Given to squalor, rags and disorder.  
I nap and amble and yawn and look, 35  
Write fool-thoughts in my grubby book,  
Recite to the children, explore at my case,  
Work when I work. beg when I please,  
Give crank-drawings, that make folks stare  
To the half-grown boys in the sunset glare, 40  
And get me a place to sleep in the hay  
At the end of a live-and-let-live day.

I find in the stubble of the new-cut weeds  
A whisper and a feasting, all one needs:  
The whisper of the strawberries, white and red 45  
Here where the new-cut weeds lie dead.

But I would not walk all alone till I die  
Without some life-drunk horns going by.  
And up round this apple-earth they come  
Blasting the whispers of the morning dumb:— 50  
Cars in a plain realistic row.  
And fair dreams fade  
When the raw horns blow.

On each snapping pennant  
A big black name:— 55  
The careering city  
Whence each car came.  
They tour from Memphis, Atlanta, Savannah,  
Tallahassee and Texarkana.  
They tour from St. Louis, Columbus, Manistee,  
They tour from Peoria, Davenport, Kankakee.  
Cars from Concord, Niagara, Boston,  
Cars from Topeka, Emporia, and Austin.  
Cars from Chicago, Hannibal, Cairo.  
Cars from Alton, Oswego, Toledo. 65  
Cars from Buffalo, Kokomo, Delphi,  
Cars from Lodi, Carmi, Loami.  
Ho for Kansas, land that restores us  
When houses choke us, and great books bore us!  
While I watch the highroad 70  
And look at the sky,  
While I watch the clouds in amazing grandeur  
Roll their legions without rain  
Over the blistering Kansas plain—

*Like a train-caller  
in a Union Depot.*

While I sit by the milestone  
And watch the sky,  
The United States  
Goes by.

75

Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking.  
Listen to the quack-horns, slack and clacking.  
Way down the road, trilling like a toad,  
Here comes the *dice*-horn, here comes the *vice*-horn,  
Here comes the *snarl*-horn, *brawl*-horn, *lewd*-horn,  
Followed by the *prude*-horn, bleak and squeaking:—  
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas.)  
Here comes the *hod*-horn, *plod*-horn, *sod*-horn,  
Nevermore-to-*roam*-horn, *loam*-horn, *home*-horn.  
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas.)

*To be given very  
harshly, with a  
snapping explosive-  
ness.*

85

Far away the Rachel-Jane  
Not defeated by the horns  
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:—

*To be read or  
sung, well-nigh in  
a whisper.*

“Love and life,  
Eternal youth—  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,  
Dew and glory,  
Love and truth,  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.

95

WHILE SMOKE-BLACK FREIGHTS ON THE DOUBLE-  
TRACKED RAILROAD,  
DRIVEN AS THOUGH BY THE FOUL FIEND'S OX-GOAD,  
SCREAMING TO THE WEST COAST, SCREAMING TO THE EAST,  
CARRY OFF A HARVEST, BRING BACK A FEAST,  
AND HARVESTING MACHINERY AND HARNESS FOR THE BEAST,  
THE HAND-CARS WHIZ, AND RATTLE ON THE RAILS,  
THE SUNLIGHT FLASHES ON THE TIN DINNER-PAILS.

*Louder and louder,  
faster and faster.*

100

And then, in an instant, ye modern men,  
Behold the procession once again,  
The United States goes by!  
Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking,  
Listen to the *wise*-horn, desperate-to-*advise* horn,  
Listen to the *fast*-horn, *kill*-horn, *blast*-horn. . . .

*In a rolling bass,  
with increasing de-  
liberation.*

104

*With a snapping  
explosiveness.*

110

Far away the Rachel-Jane  
Not defeated by the horns  
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:—

*To be sung or read  
well-nigh in a  
whisper.*

“Love and life,  
Eternal youth,  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,

115

- Dew and glory,  
Love and truth.  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.”
- The mufflers open on a score of cars  
With wonderful thunder,  
CRACK, CRACK, CRACK,  
CRACK-CRACK, CRACK-CRACK,  
CRACK, CRACK, CRACK,  
Listen to the gold-horn . . . 119  
Old horn . . .  
Cold horn . . .  
And all of the tunes, till the night comes down  
On hay-stack, and ant-hill, and wind-bitten town.  
Then far in the west, as in the beginning,  
Dim in the distance, sweet in retreating,  
Hark to the faint-horn, quaint-horn, saint-horn,  
Hark to the calm-horn, balm-horn, psalm-horn. . . . 125
- They are hunting the goals that they understand:—  
San Francisco and the brown sea-sand.  
My goal is the mystery the beggars win.  
I am caught in the web the night-winds spin.  
The edge of the wheat-ridge speaks to me.  
I talk with the leaves of the mulberry tree.  
And now I hear, as I sit all alone 140  
In the dusk, by another big Santa-Fé stone,  
The souls of the tall corn gathering round  
And the gay little souls of the grass in the ground.  
Listen to the tale the cottonwood tells.  
Listen to the windmills, singing o’er the wells. 145  
Listen to the whistling flutes without price  
Of myriad prophets out of paradise.  
Harken to the wonder  
That the night-air carries. . . .  
Listen . . . to . . . the . . . whisper . . . 150  
Of . . . the . . . prairie . . . fairies  
Singing o’er the fairy plain:—  
“Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.  
Love and glory,  
Stars and rain, 155  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet. . . .”
- To be bawled in the beginning with a snapping explosiveness, ending in a languorous chant.*
- To be sung to exactly the same whispered tune as the first five lines.*
- This section beginning sonorously, ending in a languorous whisper.*
- To the same whispered tune as the Rachel-Jane song—but very slowly.*

The Ghost of the Buffaloes<sup>5</sup>

Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry,  
 The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,  
 The floor was atremble, the door was ajar,  
 While fires, crimson fires, shown from afar.  
 I rushed to the dooryard. The city was gone. 5  
 My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.  
 It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,  
 Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream . . .  
 Then . . .

Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row, 10  
 Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.

They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,  
 And eagles gigantic, agèd and sere,  
 They rode long-horn cattle, they cried "A-la-la."  
 They lifted the knife, the bow, and the spear, 15  
 They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,  
 The midnight made grand with the cry "A-la-la."  
 The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,  
 A red-god show,  
 A red-god show, 20  
 "A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes  
 Came the rank and the file, with catamount<sup>6</sup> cries,  
 Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,  
 Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs, 25  
 Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,  
 Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,  
 Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,  
 Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,  
 Power and glory that sleep in the grass 30  
 While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.  
 They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,  
 They rode out in infinite lines to the west,  
 Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,  
 Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home, 35  
 The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,  
 And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.

5. Together with "The Chinese Night-  
 ingale," the title poem of the volume of  
 1917, in which it first appeared, "The  
 Ghost of the Buffaloes" has been re-  
 garded as the work in which Lindsay  
 achieved his greatest subtlety with re-

spect to chanted rhythms and symbolic  
 suggestiveness. It also exemplifies his  
 characteristic idealization of the primi-  
 tive past of America.

6. An American frontier term for any  
 wildcat, such as the cougar or lynx.



They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,  
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

And the wind crept by 40  
Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,  
The wind cried and cried—  
Muttered of massacres long past,  
Buffaloes in shambles vast . . .  
An owl said, "Hark, what is a-wing?" 45  
I heard a cricket caroling,  
I heard a cricket caroling,  
I heard a cricket caroling.

Then . . .  
Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high 50  
Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.  
The lords of the prairie came galloping by.  
And I cried in my heart "A-la-la, a-la-la,  
A red-god show,  
A red-god show, 55  
A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,  
A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west.  
With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,  
Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs, 60  
Cows with their calves, bulls big and vain,  
Goring the laggards, shaking the mane,  
Stamping flint feet, flashing moon eyes,  
Pompous and owlish, shaggy and wise.  
Like sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks 65  
With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.  
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,  
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,  
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,  
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled. 70  
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,  
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

I heard a cricket's cymbals play,  
A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,  
And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang, 75  
Rattled and thumped in a listless way,  
And now the wind in the chimney sang,  
The wind in the chimney,  
The wind in the chimney,  
The wind in the chimney, 80

Seemed to say:—

"Dream, boy, dream,

If you anywise can.

To dream is the work

Of beast or man.

85

Life is the west-going dream-storms' breath,

Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,

The breath of the stars, that nod on their pillows

With their golden hair mussed over their eyes."

The locust played on his musical wing,

90

Sang to his mate of love's delight.

I heard the whippoorwill's soft fret.

I heard a cricket caroling,

I heard a cricket caroling.

I heard a cricket say: "Good-night, good-night,

95

Good-night, good-night, . . . good-night."

1917

## WILLA CATHER

(1873-1947)

Willa Sibert Cather was the first modern novelist to find in the soil of the West and Southwest the rich cultural inheritance provided by its historic past and the polyglot immigrant inundation of recent times. She was born on December 7, 1873,<sup>1</sup> in a farmhouse in the Virginia hills west of Winchester, where the Cathers had farmed for nearly a century. In 1883 her family moved to a farm near Red Cloud, Nebraska, and later into the then raw frontier village.

In her Virginia childhood, Willa Cather had been tutored at home by her grandmother Boak, a well-read woman. At Red Cloud, the high school provided two teachers to whom the

young author was permanently indebted. There was a small but excellent library in her own home; she practiced German and French with neighbors who had an extraordinary collection of continental books to lend her; and a storekeeper named "Uncle Billy" Ducker taught her to read the Greek and Latin of Homer, Anacreon, and Vergil. A German music master gave many hours to her instruction in the history and appreciation of music, including opera, thus developing her interest in a subject later of major importance in her novels and stories. In contrast with such people were the materialists of the same frontier, and there was always the austerity of a new soil to be conquered. In girlhood her frontier neighbors illustrated the inevitable con-

1. Not 1876 as commonly given. E. K. Brown verifies the earlier date (p. 17; see bibliography, below).

flict between the spiritual value and the material solution which appears repeatedly in her fiction, and provided her with the prototypes for such sturdy Scandinavian or German characters as Antonia Shimerda, Thea Kronborg, and Neighbor Rosicky.

At seventeen, she went for a year to the preparatory school in Lincoln, Nebraska; then she attended the University of Nebraska, where she contributed to the local paper while studying journalism. Within a year after her graduation in 1895 she had found an editorial appointment on a small magazine in Pittsburgh. In 1897 she transferred to the Pittsburgh *Daily Leader*, as telegraph editor and drama critic. She was beginning to place her poetry and stories in a number of magazines, especially *McClure's Magazine* and *Cosmopolitan*, but her newspaper work proved a handicap to creative writing, and she turned to teaching, instructing in two Pittsburgh high schools between 1901 and 1906. A collection of poems, *April Twilights* (1903), was favorably received, but she knew that fiction was her field. Her first collection of stories, *The Troll Garden* (1905), contained "The Sculptor's Funeral," reproduced below, one of her best stories of revolt against the drabness and materialism of frontier life. In 1906 she again took a journalistic appointment, on the editorial staff of *McClure's Magazine* in New York, where she remained until 1912, when she published her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*. She was already thirty-nine, but she had in mind the ideas for several

novels and felt ready to give herself completely to them.

Although she had represented the Nebraska country in several stories in *The Troll Garden*, she was apparently not yet fully aware of the richness of this material for works of larger scope. However, she admired the stories of Sarah Orne Jewett, whose Maine was a region as apparently barren but as spiritually deep as her own Nebraska. E. K. Brown connects her personal friendship with Miss Jewett, which began in 1908, with her enlivened appreciation of her Nebraska materials, first apparent in "The Enchanted Bluff," which she published in *Harper's Magazine* early in 1909. In this story she also made her first use of the Southwest, where as a girl she had first discovered a western land with a past in its vestiges of ancient Indian and Spanish civilization. In later visits the emotional significance of this discovery assumed a symbolic value reflected in the use of these materials in several novels, notably *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

Her next three novels concerned the Nebraska frontier. *O Pioneers!* (1913) is Whitman's title, and Alexandra Bergson, the Norwegian peasant girl in Nebraska, is a woman of Whitman's choice who, when her father is defeated by the savage struggle with the soil, steps in to conquer it herself in preparation for a new race. *The Song of the Lark* (1915) is a reconstruction of such a frontier community as Willa Cather knew, and the story of a Swedish girl, Thea Kronborg, who brings the music of

that place with her on her upward climb to international fame as an operatic star. *My Ántonia* (1918) records the struggle for selfhood and unity with her environment of a Bohemian girl of immigrant parents, and is one of Miss Cather's best.

This quest for spiritual unity, so common to American writers in her time, became a desperate struggle for Willa Cather during the first World War, somewhat vitiating her grasp of her theme in *One of Ours* (1922) and *A Lost Lady* (1923). In *The Professor's House* (1925), however, she was again at her best, revealing a sensitive understanding of the "mid-channel" crisis in the lives of professional and creative people.

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), an enduring American masterpiece, the history of the Southwest after the Mexican War becomes a synthesis of the whole past of that land, and the country itself becomes an epic character along with the heroic and saintly missionaries Bishop Jean Latour and Father Joseph Vaillant. The religious devotion depicted in this book reflects Willa Cather's confirmation, in 1922, in the Protestant Episcopal Church; although not a Catholic, she had a sympathetic understanding of the historic faith of these earlier settlers of the Southwest. In her next book, *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), perhaps with slightly less success, she achieved the same kind of cultural synthesis, this time dealing with the French-Catholic colonial Quebec of 1697.

*My Mortal Enemy* (1926), *Lucy Gayheart* (1935), and *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940) are minor works only in the comparative sense. Each is a penetrating study of a woman, and each in some degree, but especially *My Mortal Enemy*, illustrates her invention of "the novel *demeuble*"—the novel stripped of superfluous characters and circumstances in order to emphasize a single individual.

Willa Cather was well recognized by her contemporaries, if never quite enough. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for one of her less distinguished novels, *One of Ours*. She received the Howells Medal for fiction of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1930) and was the first recipient of the Prix Femina Américaine (1933). In 1944, when she was seventy-one, the National Institute of Arts and Letters presented her with its gold medal. Her novels were widely translated, and enthusiastically received by European readers. She died on April 24, 1947.

The definitive edition of Willa Cather's fiction is *The Novels and Stories of Willa Cather*, Library Edition, 13 vols., 1937-1941. *April Twilights*, 1903, was revised and enlarged as *April Twilights and Other Poems*, 1933. Posthumous volumes were *The Old Beauty*, 1948, three incomplete stories; and *Willa Cather on Writing*, 1949, an unauthorized but useful compilation. Miss Cather published her essays as *Not Under Forty*, 1936. Collections of stories include: *Youth and the Bright Medusa*, 1920; *Obscure Destinies*, 1932; *December Night*, 1933; and *Early Stories of Willa Cather*, edited by Mildred R. Bennett, 1957.

The definitive biography is E. K. Brown's posthumous *Willa Cather, A Critical Biography*, completed by Leon Edel, 1953. Other useful studies are René Rapin, *Willa Cather*, Modern American Writers Series, 1930; David

Daiches, *Willa Cather, A Critical Introduction*, 1951; Mildred R. Bennett, *World of Willa Cather*, 1951, on the Red Cloud years; Edith Lewis, *Willa*

*Cather Living: A Personal Record*, 1953; Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather*, 1953; George N. Kates, editor, *Willa Cather in Europe*, 1956.

## The Sculptor's Funeral<sup>1</sup>

A group of the townspeople stood on the station siding of a little Kansas town, awaiting the coming of the night train, which was already twenty minutes overdue. The snow had fallen thick over everything; in the pale starlight the line of bluffs across the wide, white meadows south of the town made soft, smoke-coloured curves against the clear sky. The men on the siding stood first on one foot and then on the other, their hands thrust deep into their trousers pockets, their overcoats open, their shoulders screwed up with the cold; and they glanced from time to time toward the southeast, where the railroad track wound along the river shore. They conversed in low tones and moved about restlessly, seeming uncertain as to what was expected of them. There was but one of the company who looked as if he knew exactly why he was there, and he kept conspicuously apart; walking to the far end of the platform, returning to the station door, then pacing up the track again, his chin sunk in the high collar of his overcoat, his burly shoulders drooping forward, his gait heavy and dogged. Presently he was approached by a tall, spare, grizzled man clad in a faded Grand Army<sup>2</sup> suit, who shuffled out from the group and advanced with a certain deference, craning his neck forward until his back made the angle of a jack-knife three-quarters open.

"I reckon she's a-goin' to be pretty late agin to-night, Jim," he remarked in a squeaky falsetto. "S'pose it's the snow?"

"I don't know," responded the other man with a shade of annoyance, speaking from out an astonishing cataract of red beard that grew fiercely and thickly in all directions.

The spare man shifted the quill toothpick he was chewing to the other side of his mouth. "It ain't likely that anybody from the East will come with the corpse, I s'pose," he went on reflectively.

"I don't know," responded the other, more curtly than before.

"It's too bad he didn't belong to some lodge or other. I like an

1. "The Sculptor's Funeral" employs two themes that the author herself recognized as characteristic of her work: the plight of the gifted individual, especially the artist, in conflict with social prejudice or convention, as for example in *The Song of the Lark*; and the yearning of a sensitive person, confronted with a society of "newness and ugliness and sordidness, for all that is chastened and old, and noble with tra-

ditions." Willa Cather collected this story in both *The Troll Garden* (1905) and *Youth and the Bright Medusa* (1920). It was first published in *McClure's Magazine* for January, 1905.

2. The Grand Army of the Republic, an organization, founded in 1866, of men who had served with the Union forces in the Civil War; referred to below as the "G.A.R."

order funeral myself. They seem more appropriate for people of some reputation," the spare man continued, with an ingratiating concession in his shrill voice, as he carefully placed his toothpick in his vest pocket. He always carried the flag at the G. A. R. funerals in the town.

The heavy man turned on his heel, without replying, and walked up the siding. The spare man rejoined the uneasy group. "Jim's ez full ez a tick, ez ushel," he commented commiseratingly.

Just then a distant whistle sounded, and there was a shuffling of feet on the platform. A number of lanky boys, of all ages, appeared as suddenly and slimily as eels wakened by the crack of thunder; some came from the waiting-room, where they had been warming themselves by the red stove, or half asleep on the slat benches; others uncoiled themselves from baggage trucks or slid out of express wagons. Two clambered down from the driver's seat of a hearse that stood backed up against the siding. They straightened their stooping shoulders and lifted their heads, and a flash of momentary animation kindled their dull eyes at that cold, vibrant scream, the world-wide call for men. It stirred them like the note of a trumpet; just as it had often stirred the man who was coming home tonight, in his boyhood.

The night express shot, red as a rocket, from out the eastward marsh lands and wound along the river shore under the long lines of shivering poplars that sentinelled the meadows, the escaping steam hanging in grey masses against the pale sky and blotting out the Milky Way. In a moment the red glare from the headlight streamed up the snow-covered track before the siding and glittered on the wet, black rails. The burly man with the dishevelled red beard walked swiftly up the platform toward the approaching train, uncovering his head as he went. The group of men behind him hesitated, glanced questioningly at one another, and awkwardly followed his example. The train stopped, and the crowd shuffled up to the express car just as the door was thrown open, the man in the G. A. R. suit thrusting his head forward with curiosity. The express messenger appeared in the doorway, accompanied by a young man in a long ulster and travelling cap.

"Are Mr. Merrick's friends here?" inquired the young man.

The group on the platform swayed uneasily. Philip Phelps, the banker, responded with dignity: "We have come to take charge of the body. Mr. Merrick's father is very feeble and can't be about."

"Send the agent out here," growled the express messenger, "and tell the operator to lend a hand."

The coffin was got out of its rough-box and down on the snowy platform. The townspeople drew back enough to make room for it and then formed a close semicircle about it, looking curiously at the

palm leaf which lay across the black cover. No one said anything. The baggage man stood by his truck, waiting to get at the trunks. The engine panted heavily, and the fireman dodged in and out among the wheels with his yellow torch and long oil-can, snapping the spindle boxes. The young Bostonian, one of the dead sculptor's pupils who had come with the body, looked about him helplessly. He turned to the banker, the only one of that black, uneasy, stoop-shouldered group who seemed enough of an individual to be addressed.

"None of Mr. Merrick's brothers are here?" he asked uncertainly.

The man with the red beard for the first time stepped up and joined the others. "No, they have not come yet; the family is scattered. The body will be taken directly to the house." He stooped and took hold of one of the handles of the coffin.

"Take the long hill road up, Thompson, it will be easier on the horses," called the liveryman as the undertaker snapped the door of the hearse and prepared to mount to the driver's seat.

Laird, the red-bearded lawyer, turned again to the stranger: "We didn't know whether there would be anyone with him or not," he explained. "It's a long walk, so you'd better go up in the hack." He pointed to a single battered conveyance, but the young man replied stiffly: "Thank you, but I think I will go up with the hearse. If you don't object," turning to the undertaker, "I'll ride with you."

They clambered up over the wheels and drove off in the starlight up the long, white hill toward the town. The lamps in the still village were shining from under the low, snow-burdened roofs; and beyond, on every side, the plains reached out into emptiness, peaceful and wide as the soft sky itself, and wrapped in a tangible, white silence.

When the hearse backed up to a wooden sidewalk before a naked, weather-beaten frame house, the same composite, ill-defined group that had stood upon the station siding was huddled about the gate. The front yard was an icy swamp, and a couple of warped planks, extending from the sidewalk to the door, made a sort of rickety foot-bridge. The gate hung on one hinge, and was opened wide with difficulty. Stevens, the young stranger, noticed that something black was tied to the knob of the front door.

The grating sound made by the casket, as it was drawn from the hearse, was answered by a scream from the house; the front door was wrenched open, and a tall, corpulent woman rushed out bare-headed into the snow and flung herself upon the coffin, shrieking: "My boy, my boy! And this is how you've come home to me!"

As Stevens turned away and closed his eyes with a shudder of unutterable repulsion, another woman, also tall, but flat and angu-

lar, dressed entirely in black, darted out of the house and caught Mrs. Merrick by the shoulders, crying sharply: "Come, come, mother; you mustn't go on like this!" Her tone changed to one of obsequious solemnity as she turned to the banker: "The parlour is ready, Mr. Phelps."

The bearers carried the coffin along the narrow boards, while the undertaker ran ahead with the coffin-rests. They bore it into a large, unheated room that smelled of dampness and disuse and furniture polish, and set it down under a hanging lamp ornamented with jingling glass prisms and before a "Rogers group"<sup>3</sup> of John Alden and Priscilla, wreathed with smilax. Henry Steavens stared about him with the sickening conviction that there had been a mistake, and that he had somehow arrived at the wrong destination. He looked at the clover-green Brussels,<sup>4</sup> the fat plush upholstery, among the hand-painted china plaques and panels and vases, for some mark of identification,—for something that might once conceivably have belonged to Harvey Merrick. It was not until he recognized his friend in the crayon portrait of a little boy in kilts and curls, hanging above the piano, that he felt willing to let any of these people approach the coffin.

"Take the lid off, Mr. Thompson; let me see my boy's face," wailed the elder woman between her sobs. This time Steavens looked fearfully, almost beseechingly into her face, red and swollen under its masses of strong, black, shiny hair. He flushed, dropped his eyes, and then, almost incredulously, looked again. There was a kind of power about her face—a kind of brutal handsomeness, even; but it was scarred and furrowed by violence, and so coloured and coarsened by fiercer passions that grief seemed never to have laid a gentle finger there. The long nose was distended and knobbed at the end, and there were deep lines on either side of it; her heavy, black brows almost met across her forehead, her teeth were large and square, and set far apart—teeth that could tear. She filled the room; the men were obliterated, seemed tossed about like twigs in an angry water, and even Steavens felt himself being drawn into the whirlpool.

The daughter—the tall, raw-boned woman in *crêpe*, with a mourning comb in her hair which curiously lengthened her long face—sat stiffly upon the sofa, her hands, conspicuous for their large knuckles, folded in her lap, her mouth and eyes drawn down, solemnly awaiting the opening of the coffin. Near the door stood a mulatto woman, evidently a servant in the house, with a timid bear-

3. John Rogers (1829–1904), American sculptor, became famous for his statuette groups, usually sentimental and descriptive, which had an enormous

vogue as parlor ornaments, especially in rural areas.

4. The Belgian city of Brussels gave its name to a sturdy carpet weave that became common in the United States.



ing and an emaciated face pitifully sad and gentle. She was weeping silently, the corner of her calico apron lifted to her eyes, occasionally suppressing a long, quivering sob. Steavens walked over and stood beside her.

Feeble steps were heard on the stairs, and an old man, tall and frail, odorous of pipe smoke, with shaggy, unkempt grey hair and a dingy beard, tobacco stained about the mouth, entered uncertainly. He went slowly up to the coffin and stood rolling a blue cotton handkerchief between his hands, seeming so pained and embarrassed by his wife's orgy of grief that he had no consciousness of anything else.

"There, there, Annie, dear, don't take on so," he quavered timidly, putting out a shaking hand and awkwardly patting her elbow. She turned and sank upon his shoulder with such violence that he tottered a little. He did not even glance toward the coffin, but continued to look at her with a dull, frightened, appealing expression, as a spaniel looks at the whip. His sunken cheeks slowly reddened and burned with miserable shame. When his wife rushed from the room, her daughter strode after her with set lips. The servant stole up to the coffin, bent over it for a moment, and then slipped away to the kitchen, leaving Steavens, the lawyer, and the father to themselves. The old man stood looking down at his dead son's face. The sculptor's splendid head seemed even more noble in its rigid stillness than in life. The dark hair had crept down upon the wide forehead; the face seemed strangely long, but in it there was not that repose we expect to find in the faces of the dead. The brows were so drawn that there were two deep lines above the beaked nose, and the chin was thrust forward defiantly. It was as though the strain of life had been so sharp and bitter that death could not at once relax the tension and smooth the countenance into perfect peace—as though he were still guarding something precious, which might even yet be wrested from him.

The old man's lips were working under his stained beard. He turned to the lawyer with timid deference: "Phelps and the rest are comin' back to set up with Harve, ain't they?" he asked. "Thank 'ee, Jim, thank 'ee." He brushed the hair back gently from his son's forehead. "He was a good boy, Jim; always a good boy. He was ez gentle ez a child and the kindest of 'em all—only we didn't none of us ever onderstand him." The tears trickled slowly down his beard and dropped upon the sculptor's coat.

"Martin, Martin! Oh, Martin! come here," his wife wailed from the top of the stairs. The old man started timorously: "Yes, Annie, I'm coming." He turned away, hesitated, stood for a moment in miserable indecision; then reached back and patted the dead man's hair softly, and stumbled from the room.

"Poor old man, I didn't think he had any tears left. Seems as if his eyes would have gone dry long ago. At his age nothing cuts very deep," remarked the lawyer.

Something in his tone made Steavens glance up. While the mother had been in the room, the young man had scarcely seen any one else; but now, from the moment he first glanced into Jim Laird's florid face and blood-shot eyes, he knew that he had found what he had been heartsick at not finding before—the feeling, the understanding, that must exist in some one, even here.

The man was red as his beard, with features swollen and blurred by dissipation, and a hot, blazing blue eye. His face was strained—that of a man who is controlling himself with difficulty—and he kept plucking at his beard with a sort of fierce resentment. Steavens, sitting by the window, watched him turn down the glaring lamp, still its jangling pendants with an angry gesture, and then stand with his hands locked behind him, staring down into the master's face. He could not help wondering what link there had been between the porcelain vessel and so sooty a lump of potter's clay.

From the kitchen an uproar was sounding; when the dining-room door opened, the import of it was clear. The mother was abusing the maid for having forgotten to make the dressing for the chicken salad which had been prepared for the watchers. Steavens had never heard anything in the least like it; it was injured, emotional, dramatic abuse, unique and masterly in its excruciating cruelty, as violent and unrestrained as had been her grief of twenty minutes before. With a shudder of disgust the lawyer went into the dining-room and closed the door into the kitchen.

"Poor Roxy's getting it now," he remarked when he came back. "The Merricks took her out of the poor-house years ago; and if her loyalty would let her, I guess the poor old thing could tell tales that would curdle your blood. She's the mulatto woman who was standing in here a while ago, with her apron to her eyes. The old woman is a fury; there never was anybody like her. She made Harvey's life a hell for him when he lived at home; he was so sick ashamed of it. I never could see how he kept himself sweet."

"He was wonderful," said Steavens slowly, "wonderful; but until tonight I have never known how wonderful."

"That is the eternal wonder of it, anyway; that it can come even from such a dung heap as this," the lawyer cried, with a sweeping gesture which seemed to indicate much more than the four walls within which they stood.

"I think I'll see whether I can get a little air. The room is so close I am beginning to feel rather faint," murmured Steavens, struggling with one of the windows. The sash was stuck, however, and would not yield, so he sat down dejectedly and began pulling at his collar.

The lawyer came over, loosened the sash with one blow of his red fist and sent the window up a few inches. Steavens thanked him, but the nausea which had been gradually climbing into his throat for the last half hour left him with but one desire—a desperate feeling that he must get away from this place with what was left of Harvey Merrick. Oh, he comprehended well enough now the quiet bitterness of the smile that he had seen so often on his master's lips!

Once when Merrick returned from a visit home, he brought with him a singularly feeling and suggestive bas-relief of a thin, faded old woman, sitting and sewing something pinned to her knee; while a full-lipped, full-blooded little urchin, his trousers held up by a single gallows, stood beside her, impatiently twitching her gown to call her attention to a butterfly he had caught. Steavens, impressed by the tender and delicate modelling of the thin, tired face, had asked him if it were his mother. He remembered the dull flush that had burned up in the sculptor's face.

The lawyer was sitting in a rocking-chair beside the coffin, his head thrown back and his eyes closed. Steavens looked at him earnestly, puzzled at the line of the chin, and wondering why a man should conceal a feature of such distinction under that disfiguring shock of beard. Suddenly, as though he felt the young sculptor's keen glance, Jim Laird opened his eyes.

"Was he always a good deal of an oyster?" he asked abruptly. "He was terribly shy as a boy."

"Yes, he was an oyster, since you put it so," rejoined Steavens. "Although he could be very fond of people, he always gave one the impression of being detached. He disliked violent emotion; he was reflective, and rather distrustful of himself—except, of course, as regarded his work. He was sure enough there. He distrusted men pretty thoroughly and women even more, yet somehow without believing ill of them. He was determined, indeed, to believe the best; but he seemed afraid to investigate."

"A burnt dog dreads the fire," said the lawyer grimly, and closed his eyes.

Steavens went on and on, reconstructing that whole miserable boyhood. All this raw, biting ugliness had been the portion of the man whose mind was to become an exhaustless gallery of beautiful impressions—so sensitive that the mere shadow of a poplar leaf flickering against a sunny wall would be etched and held there for ever. Surely, if ever a man had the magic word in his finger tips, it was Merrick. Whatever he touched, he revealed its holiest secret; liberated it from enchantment and restored it to its pristine loveliness. Upon whatever he had come in contact with, he had left a beautiful record of the experience—a sort of ethereal signature; a

scent, a sound, a colour that was his own.

Steavens understood now the real tragedy of his master's life; neither love nor wine, as many had conjectured; but a blow which had fallen earlier and cut deeper than anything else could have done—a shame not his, and yet so unescapably his, to hide in his heart from his very boyhood. And without—the frontier warfare; the yearning of a boy, cast ashore upon a desert of newness and ugliness and sordidness, for all that is chastened and old, and noble with traditions.

At eleven o'clock the tall, flat woman in black announced that the watchers were arriving, and asked them to "step into the dining-room." As Steavens rose, the lawyer said dryly: "You go on—it'll be a good experience for you. I'm not equal to that crowd tonight; I've had twenty years of them."

As Steavens closed the door after him he glanced back at the lawyer, sitting by the coffin in the dim light, with his chin resting on his hand.

The same misty group that had stood before the door of the express car shuffled into the dining-room. In the light of the kerosene lamp they separated and became individuals. The minister, a pale, feeble-looking man with white hair and blond chin-whiskers, took his seat beside a small side table and placed his Bible upon it. The Grand Army man sat down behind the stove and tilted his chair back comfortably against the wall, fishing his quill toothpick from his waistcoat pocket. The two bankers, Phelps and Elder, sat off in a corner behind the dinner-table, where they could finish their discussion of the new usury law and its effect on chattel security loans. The real estate agent, an old man with a smiling, hypocritical face, soon joined them. The coal and lumber dealer and the cattle shipper sat on opposite sides of the hard coal-burner, their feet on the nickel-work. Steavens took a book from his pocket and began to read. The talk around him ranged through various topics of local interest while the house was quieting down. When it was clear that the members of the family were in bed, the Grand Army man hitched his shoulders and, untangling his long legs, caught his heels on the rounds of his chair.

"S'pose there'll be a will, Phelps?" he queried in his weak falsetto.

The banker laughed disagreeably, and began trimming his nails with a pearl-handled pocket-knife.

"There'll scarcely be any need for one, will there?" he queried in his turn.

The restless Grand Army man shifted his position again, getting his knees still nearer his chin. "Why, the ole man says Harve's done right well lately," he chirped.

The other banker spoke up. "I reckon he means by that Harve

ain't asked him to mortgage any more farms lately, so as he could go on with his education."

"Seems like my mind don't reach back to a time when Harve wasn't bein' edycated," tittered the Grand Army man.

There was a general chuckle. The minister took out his handkerchief and blew his nose sonorously. Banker Phelps closed his knife with a snap. "It's too bad the old man's sons didn't turn out better," he remarked with reflective authority. "They never hung together. He spent money enough on Harve to stock a dozen cattle-farms, and he might as well have poured it into Sand Creek. If Harve had stayed at home and helped nurse what little they had, and gone into stock on the old man's bottom farm, they might all have been well fixed. But the old man had to trust everything to tenants and was cheated right and left."

"Harve never could have handled stock none," interposed the cattleman. "He hadn't it in him to be sharp. Do you remember when he bought Sander's mules for eight-year olds, when everybody in town knew that Sander's father-in-law give 'em to his wife for a wedding present eighteen years before, an' they was full-grown mules then?"

The company laughed discreetly, and the Grand Army man rubbed his knees with a spasm of childish delight.

"Harve never was much account for anything practical, and he shore was never fond of work," began the coal and lumber dealer. "I mind the last time he was home; the day he left, when the old man was out to the barn helpin' his hand hitch up to take Harve to the train, and Cal Moots was patchin' up the fence; Harve, he come out on the step and sings out, in his ladylike voice: 'Cal Moots, Cal Moots! please come cord my trunk.'"

"That's Harve for you," approved the Grand Army man. "I kin hear him howlin' yet, when he was a big feller in long pants and his mother used to whale him with a rawhide in the barn for lettin' the cows git foundered in the cornfield when he was drivin' 'em home from pasture. He killed a cow of mine that-a-way onct—a pure Jersey and the best milker I had, an' the ole man had to put up for her. Harve, he was watchin' the sun set acrost the marshes when the anamile got away."

"Where the old man made his mistake was in sending the boy East to school," said Phelps, stroking his goatee and speaking in a deliberate, judicial tone. "There was where he got his head full of nonsense. What Harve needed, of all people, was a course in some first-class Kansas City business college."

The letters were swimming before Steavens's eyes. Was it possible that these men did not understand, that the palm on the coffin meant nothing to them? The very name of their town would have

remained for ever buried in the postal guide had it not been now and again mentioned in the world in connection with Harvey Merrick's. He remembered what his master had said to him on the day of his death, after the congestion of both lungs had shut off any probability of recovery, and the sculptor had asked his pupil to send his body home. "It's not a pleasant place to be lying while the world is moving and doing and bettering," he had said with a feeble smile, "but it rather seems as though we ought to go back to the place we came from, in the end. The townspeople will come in for a look at me; and after they have had their say, I shan't have much to fear from the judgment of God!"

The cattleman took up the comment. "Forty's young for a Merrick to cash in; they usually hang on pretty well. Probably he helped it along with whisky."

"His mother's people were not long lived, and Harvey never had a robust constitution," said the minister mildly. He would have liked to say more. He had been the boy's Sunday-school teacher, and had been fond of him; but he felt that he was not in a position to speak. His own sons had turned out badly, and it was not a year since one of them had made his last trip home in the express car, shot in a gambling-house in the Black Hills.

"Nevertheless, there is no disputin' that Harve frequently looked upon the wine when it was red, also variegated, and it shore made an uncommon fool of him," moralized the cattleman.

Just then the door leading into the parlour rattled loudly and every one started involuntarily, looking relieved when only Jim Laird came out. The Grand Army man ducked his head when he saw the spark in his blue, bloodshot eye. They were all afraid of Jim; he was a drunkard, but he could twist the law to suit his client's needs as no other man in all western Kansas could do, and there were many who tried. The lawyer closed the door behind him, leaned back against it and folded his arms, cocking his head a little to one side. When he assumed this attitude in the court-room, ears were always pricked up, as it usually foretold a flood of withering sarcasm.

"I've been with you gentlemen before," he began in a dry, even tone, "when you've sat by the coffins of boys born and raised in this town; and, if I remember rightly, you were never any too well satisfied when you checked them up. What's the matter, anyhow? Why is it that reputable young men are as scarce as millionaires in Sand City? It might almost seem to a stranger that there was some way something the matter with your progressive town. Why did Ruben Sayer, the brightest young lawyer you ever turned out, after he had come home from the university as straight as a die, take to drinking and forge a check and shoot himself? Why did Bill Merritt's son die

of the shakes in a saloon in Omaha? Why was Mr. Thomas's son, here, shot in a gambling-house? Why did young Adams burn his mill to beat the insurance companies and go to the pen?"

The lawyer paused and unfolded his arms, laying one clenched fist quietly on the table. "I'll tell you why. Because you drummed nothing but money and knavery into their ears from the time they wore knickerbockers; because you carped away at them as you've been carping here tonight, holding our friends Phelps and Elder up to them for their models, as our grandfathers held up George Washington and John Adams. But the boys were young, and raw at the business you put them to, and how could they match coppers with such artists as Phelps and Elder? You wanted them to be successful rascals; they were only unsuccessful ones—that's all the difference. There was only one boy ever raised in this borderland between ruffianism and civilization who didn't come to grief, and you hated Harvey Merrick more for winning out than you hated all the other boys who got under the wheels. Lord, Lord, how you did hate him! Phelps, here, is fond of saying that he could buy and sell us all out any time he's a mind to; but he knew Harve wouldn't have given a tinker's damn for his bank and all his cattle-farms put together; and a lack of appreciation, that way, goes hard with Phelps.

"Old Nimrod thinks Harve drank too much; and this from such as Nimrod and me!

"Brother Elder says Harve was too free with the old man's money—fell short in filial consideration, maybe. Well, we can all remember the very tone in which brother Elder swore his own father was a liar, in the county court; and we all know that the old man came out of that partnership with his son as bare as a sheared lamb. But maybe I'm getting personal, and I'd better be driving ahead at what I want to say."

The lawyer paused a moment, squared his heavy shoulders, and went on: "Harvey Merrick and I went to school together, back East. We were dead in earnest, and we wanted you all to be proud of us some day. We meant to be great men. Even I, and I haven't lost my sense of humor, gentlemen, I meant to be a great man. I came back here to practise, and I found you didn't in the least want me to be a great man. You wanted me to be a shrewd lawyer—oh, yes! Our veteran here wanted me to get him an increase of pension, because he had dyspepsia; Phelps wanted a new county survey that would put the widow Wilson's little bottom farm inside his south line; Elder wanted to lend money at 5 per cent. a month, and get it collected; and Stark here wanted to wheedle old women up in Vermont into investing their annuities in real-estate mortgages that are not worth the paper they are written on. Oh, you needed me hard

enough, and you'll go on needing me!

"Well, I came back here and became the damned shyster you wanted me to be. You pretend to have some sort of respect for me; and yet you'll stand up and throw mud at Harvey Merrick, whose soul you couldn't dirty and whose hands you couldn't tic. Oh, you're a discriminating lot of Christians! There have been times when the sight of Harvey's name in some Eastern paper has made me hang my head like a whipped dog; and, again, times when I liked to think of him off there in the world, away from all this hog-wallow, climbing the big, clean up-grade he'd set for himself.

"And we? Now that we've fought and lied and sweated and stolen, and hated as only the disappointed strugglers in a bitter, dead little western town know how to do, what have we got to show for it? Harvey Merrick wouldn't have given one sunset over your marshes for all you've got put together, and you know it. It's not for me to say why, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, a genius should ever have been called from this place of hatred and bitter waters; but I want this Boston man to know that the drivel he's been hearing here tonight is the only tribute any truly great man could have from such a lot of sick, side-tracked, burnt-dog, land-poor sharks as the here-present financiers of Sand City—upon which town may God have mercy!"

The lawyer thrust out his hand to Steavens as he passed him, caught up his overcoat in the hall, and had left the house before the Grand Army man had had time to lift his ducked head and crane his long neck about at his fellows.

Next day Jim Laird was drunk and unable to attend the funeral services. Steavens called twice at his office, but was compelled to start East without seeing him. He had a presentiment that he would hear from him again, and left his address on the lawyer's table; but if Laird found it, he never acknowledged it. The thing in him that Harvey Merrick had loved must have gone under ground with Harvey Merrick's coffin, for it never spoke again, and Jim got the cold he died of driving across the Colorado mountains to defend one of Phelps's sons who had got into trouble out there by cutting government timber.





# The Attack on Convention

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H. L. MENCKEN

(1880-1956)

H. L. Mencken was the earliest of the iconoclasts of the 1920's—the most irreverent, clamorous, and resourceful leader of the crusade which crumbled the cherished idols and stereotypes of a surviving Victorian gentility. In his newspaper column (after 1910), in his editorials, and in his collections of essays, he made a battlefield of the entire terrain of contemporary life, attacking with equal agility and skill wherever he found what he regarded as entrenched stupidity or ignorance or hypocrisy—in literary standards, government, politics, economic life, foreign relations, and the manners or morals of his fellow Americans. He excoriated all official and professional defenders of the stereotype, especially the “professors,” who, he believed, extended the dead hand of mere authority from universities moribund in traditionalism and intellectual timidity. An irony of his situation, which he no doubt enjoyed, was that his detractors regarded him as a dangerous radical, while actually he was, and is today considered, a conservative force.

Henry Louis Mencken was

born in 1880 in Baltimore, Maryland, of mixed German and Irish stock, and was brought up in a family tradition that exalted learning and fostered a speculative originality of mind. His father conducted a successful tobacco business, and Mencken was early familiar with the concept that economic responsibility and intellectual leadership are properly combined in one person.

At the age of sixteen he was graduated from Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, and chose to study privately instead of going to college. Since his writings show a genuinely learned man, he evidently proceeded successfully with his self-discipline. At nineteen, having determined on a career in journalism, he joined the Baltimore *Morning Herald*. Later he became an editor for the Sun Syndicate, first on the *Evening Herald* (1905) and then on the Baltimore *Sun* (1906). He continued an association with these Baltimore papers as late as 1941, in addition to his many other editorial connections. In 1908 he became drama critic for *The Smart Set*,

and from 1914 to 1923 he was its coeditor, with George Jean Nathan. In 1917 he began a long association as literary adviser to Alfred A. Knopf, then notable among the imaginative younger publishers. He made several trips abroad, and from 1916 to 1918 he served as a correspondent in Germany. Meanwhile his *Sun* column, "The Free Lance" (1910-1916), with its famous battles for individualism and freedom of public expression, had established his character as a controversialist. A *Book of Prefaces* (1917) was the first of his most characteristic critical volumes. In 1919 appeared *Prejudices: First Series*, and he continued to add other volumes of his collected critical essays until the *Sixth Series* of 1927. He winnowed the best of these for *Selected Prejudices* (1926) and *Selected Prejudices: Second Series* (1927). *The American Credo* (1920), a collaboration with Nathan "toward the interpretation of the National Mind," is associated in spirit with the *Prejudices*.

One of the most exciting periodicals of this period was *The American Mercury*, founded by Mencken and Nathan in 1923-1924, and edited by Mencken until 1933. Its policy was to satirize the stupidity of the mass mind and such typical manifestations of the period as prohibition; to expose, in a "spirit of boisterous scepticism," the "gaudy, gorgeous American scene"; and to promote authors associated with this crusade of liberation, among whom were Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters,

Carl Van Vechten, Eugene O'Neill, and Sinclair Lewis. During this whole period Mencken was also active as a contributing editor of the *Nation*.

In 1919 this versatile author and prodigious worker had published the first edition of a book which has permanently influenced our cultural history. This was *The American Language* (revised and enlarged 1921, 1923, 1936; *Supplement One*, 1945; *Supplement Two*, 1948). At first this work was ridiculed by the same reactionary authoritarians who had disapproved of the gusty, indigenous language that Mencken employed in his own writing. Yet it is now regarded as the sound beginning of a new functional approach in scholarly linguistics, and it authorized a younger generation of authors in their feeling for a language closer to the character of the best spoken American.

Later works of Mencken include, most importantly, his classic autobiographical series: *Happy Days, 1880-1892* (1940); *Newspaper Days, 1899-1906* (1941); and *Heathen Days, 1890-1936* (1943). His *Treatise on the Gods* appeared in 1930, the *Treatise on Right and Wrong* in 1934, and *A Mencken Chrestomathy*, a general anthology of his work, in 1949.

In addition to the volumes mentioned above, there are *A Carnival of Buncombe*, 1956, edited by Malcolm Moos; *Minority Report: H. L. Mencken's Notebooks*, 1956; *Prejudices: A Selection*, 1958, edited by James T. Farrell; and *The Bathtub Hoax and Other Blasts and Bravos from the Chicago Tribune*, 1958, collected by Robert McHugh. For biography, see

the autobiographical volumes listed above, and Ernest A. Boyd, *H. L. Mencken*, 1925; Isaac Goldberg, *The Man Mencken*, 1925; Walter Lippman,

*H. L. Mencken*, 1926; Edgar Kemler, *The Irreverent Mr. Mencken*, 1950; and William Manchester, *Disturber of the Peace*, 1951.

## From American Culture<sup>1</sup>

The capital defect in the culture of These States<sup>2</sup> is the lack of a civilized aristocracy, secure in its position, animated by an intelligent curiosity, skeptical of all facile generalizations, superior to the sentimentality of the mob, and delighting in the battle of ideas for its own sake. The word I use, despite the qualifying adjective, has got itself meanings, of course, that I by no means intend to convey. Any mention of an aristocracy, to a public fed upon democratic fustian, is bound to bring up images of stockbrokers' wives lolling obscenely in opera boxes, or of haughty Englishmen slaughtering whole generations of grouse in an inordinate and incomprehensible manner, or of bogus counts coming over to work their magic upon the daughters of breakfast-food and bathtub kings. This misconception belongs to the general American tradition. Its depth and extent are constantly revealed by the naïve assumption that the so-called fashionable folk of the large cities—chiefly wealthy industrials in the interior-decorator and country-club stage of culture—constitute an aristocracy, and by the scarcely less remarkable assumption that the peerage of England is identical with the gentry—that is, that such men as Lord Northcliffe,<sup>3</sup> Lord Riddell and even Lord Reading were English gentlemen.

Here, as always, the worshiper is the father of the gods, and no less when they are evil than when they are benign. The inferior man must find himself superiors, that he may marvel at his political equality with them, and in the absence of recognizable superiors *de facto* he creates superiors *de jure*.<sup>4</sup> The sublime principle of one man, one vote must be translated into terms of dollars, diamonds, fashionable intelligence; the equality of all men before the law must have clear and dramatic proofs. Sometimes, perhaps, the thing goes further and is more subtle. The inferior man needs an aristocracy to demonstrate, not only his mere equality, but also his actual su-

1. First published in the *Yale Review* for June, 1920, this essay subsequently appeared in the section headed "The National Letters," in *Prejudices: Second Series* (1920). It was reprinted in *A Mencken Chrestomathy* (1949).

2. "These States" was a favorite and characteristic phrase of Walt Whitman's.

3. Lord Northcliffe, born Alfred C. W. Harmsworth, was descended from an ancient and influential family. He became a baron in 1905, and developed several London newspapers, including

the *Times*. He was the recognized spokesman of the conservatives. Baron Riddell (not "Riddel") was in youth a Welsh barrister and also became a leader in conservative journalism, although less of a luminary than Lord Northcliffe. The Marquis of Reading, born Rufus Daniel Isaacs, won distinction by his gifted statesmanship, was created lord chief justice of England in 1913, and became viceroy and governor general of India in 1921.

4. That is, not finding superiors in actuality, he creates them by law.

priority. The society columns in the newspapers may have some such origin. They may visualize once more the accomplished journalist's understanding of the mob mind that he plays upon so skillfully, as upon some immense and cacophonous organ, always going *fortissimo*. What the inferior man and his wife see in the sinister revels of those brummagem<sup>5</sup> first families, I suspect, is often a massive witness to their own higher rectitude—in brief, to their firmer grasp upon the immutable axioms of Christian virtue, the one sound boast of the nether nine-tenths of humanity in every land under the cross.

But this bugaboo aristocracy is actually bogus, and the evidence of its bogusness lies in the fact that it is insecure. One gets into it only onerously, but out of it very easily. Entrance is effected by dint of a long and bitter struggle, and the chief accidents of that struggle are almost intolerable humiliations. The aspirant must school and steel himself to sniffs and sneers; he must see the door slammed upon him a hundred times before ever it is thrown open to him. To get in at all he must show a talent for abasement—and abasement makes him timorous. Worse, that timorousness is not cured when he succeeds at last. On the contrary, it is made even more tremulous, for what he faces within the gates is a scheme of things made up almost wholly of harsh and often unintelligible taboos, and the penalty for violating even the least of them is swift and disastrous. He must exhibit exactly the right social habits, appetites and prejudices, public and private. He must harbor exactly the right enthusiasms and indignations. He must have a hearty taste for exactly the right sports and games. His attitude toward the fine arts must be properly tolerant and yet not a shade too eager. He must read and like exactly the right books, pamphlets and public journals. He must put up at the right hotels when he travels. His wife must patronize the right milliners. He himself must stick to the right haberdashery. He must live in the right neighborhood. He must even embrace the right doctrines of religion. It would ruin him, for all society column purposes, to move to Union Hill, N.J., or to drink coffee from his saucer, or to marry a chambermaid with a gold tooth, or to join the Seventh Day Adventists. Within the boundaries of his curious order he is worse fettered than a monk in a cell. Its obscure conception of propriety, its nebulous notion that this or that is honorable, hampers him in every direction, and very narrowly. What he resigns when he enters, even when he makes his first deprecating knock at the door, is every right to attack the ideas that happen to prevail within. Such as they are, he must accept them without question. And as they shift and change he must shift and change with them, silently

5. British slang, a word derived from the name of the city of Birmingham,

where, supposedly, trashy but showy wares were manufactured.

and quickly.

Obviously, that order cannot constitute a genuine aristocracy, in any rational sense. A genuine aristocracy is grounded upon very much different principles. Its first and most salient character is its interior security, and the chief visible evidence of that security is the freedom that goes with it—not only freedom in act, the divine right of the aristocrat to do what he damn well pleases, so long as he does not violate the primary guarantees and obligations of his class, but also and more importantly freedom in thought, the liberty to try and err, the right to be his own man. It is the instinct of a true aristocracy, not to punish eccentricity by expulsion, but to throw a mantle of protection about it—to safeguard it from the suspicions and resentments of the lower orders. Those lower orders are inert, timid, inhospitable to ideas, hostile to changes, faithful to a few maudlin superstitions. All progress goes on on the higher levels. It is there that salient personalities, made secure by artificial immunities, may oscillate most widely from the normal track. It is within that entrenched fold, out of reach of the immemorial certainties of the mob, that extraordinary men of the lower orders may find their city of refuge, and breathe a clear air. This, indeed, is at once the hall-mark and the justification of a genuine aristocracy—that it is beyond responsibility to the general masses of men, and hence superior to both their degraded longings and their no less degraded aversions. It is nothing if it is not autonomous, curious, venturesome, courageous, and everything if it is. It is the custodian of the qualities that make for change and experiment; it is the class that organizes danger to the service of the race; it pays for its high prerogatives by standing in the forefront of the fray.

No such aristocracy, it must be plain, is now on view in the United States. The makings of one were visible in the Virginia of the Eighteenth Century, but with Jefferson and Washington the promise died. In New England, it seems to me, there was never anything of the sort, either in being or in nascency: there was only a theocracy that degenerated very quickly into a plutocracy on the one hand and a caste of sterile pedants on the other—the passion for God splitting into a lust for dollars and a weakness for mere words. Despite the common notion to the contrary—a notion generated by confusing literacy with intelligence—the New England of the great days never showed any genuine enthusiasm for ideas. It began its history as a slaughter-house of ideas, and it is today not easily distinguishable from a cold-storage plant. Its celebrated adventures in mysticism, once apparently so bold and significant, are now seen to have been little more than an elaborate hocus-pocus—respectable Unitarians shocking the peasantry and scaring the horned cattle in the fields by masquerading in the robes of Rosicrucians.

The notions that it embraced in those austere and far-off days were stale, and when it had finished with them they were dead. So in politics. Since the Civil War it has produced fewer political ideas, as political ideas run in the Republic, than any average county in Kansas or Nebraska. Appomattox seemed to be a victory for New England idealism. It was actually a victory for the New England plutocracy, and that plutocracy has dominated thought above the Housatonic<sup>6</sup> ever since. The sect of professional idealists has so far dwindled that it has ceased to be of any importance, even as an opposition. When the plutocracy is challenged now, it is challenged by the proletariat.

Well, what is on view in New England is on view in all other parts of the nation, sometimes with ameliorations, but usually with the colors merely exaggerated. What one beholds, sweeping the eye over the land, is a culture that, like the national literature, is in three layers—the plutocracy on top, a vast mass of undifferentiated human blanks bossed by demagogues at the bottom, and a forlorn *intelligentsia* gasping out a precarious life between. I need not set out at any length, I hope, the intellectual deficiencies of the plutocracy—its utter failure to show anything even remotely resembling the makings of an aristocracy. It is badly educated, it is stupid, it is full of low-caste superstitions and indignations, it is without decent traditions or informing vision; above all, it is extraordinarily lacking in the most elemental independence and courage. Out of this class comes the grotesque fashionable society of our big towns, already described. It shows all the stigmata of inferiority—moral certainty, cruelty, suspicion of ideas, fear. Never does it function more revealingly than in the recurrent *pogroms* against radicalism, *i.e.*, against humorless persons who, like Andrew Jackson, take the platitudes of democracy seriously. And what is the theory at the bottom of all these proceedings? So far as it can be reduced to comprehensible terms it is much less a theory than a fear—a shivering, idiotic, discreditable fear of a mere banshee<sup>7</sup>—an overpowering, paralyzing dread that some extra-cloquent Red, permitted to emit his balderdash unwhipped, may eventually convert a couple of courageous men, and that the courageous men, filled with indignation against the plutocracy, may take to the highroad, burn down a nail-factory or two, and slit the throat of some virtuous profiteer.

Obviously, it is out of reason to look for any hospitality to ideas in a class so extravagantly fearful of even the most palpably absurd of them. Its philosophy is firmly grounded upon the thesis that the existing order must stand forever free from attack, and not only from at-

6. *I.e.*, in New England. The Housatonic flows through western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

7. In Irish folklore the wailing of a banshee—a female spirit—foretold the approach of death.

tack, but also from the mere academic criticism, and its ethics are firmly grounded upon the thesis that every attempt at any such criticism is a proof of moral turpitude. Within its own ranks, protected by what may be regarded as the privilege of the order, there is nothing to take the place of this criticism. In other countries the plutocracy has often produced men of reflective and analytical habit, eager to rationalize its instincts and to bring it into some sort of relationship to the main streams of human thought. The case of David Ricardo at once comes to mind, and there have been many others: John Bright, Richard Cobden, George Grote.<sup>8</sup> But in the United States no such phenomenon has been visible. Nor has the plutocracy ever fostered an inquiring spirit among its intellectual valets and footmen, which is to say, among the gentlemen who compose headlines and leading articles for its newspapers. What chiefly distinguishes the daily press of the United States from the press of all other countries pretending to culture is not its lack of truthfulness or even its lack of dignity and honor, for these deficiencies are common to newspapers everywhere, but its incurable fear of ideas, its constant effort to evade the discussion of fundamentals by translating all issues into a few elemental fears, its incessant reduction of all reflection to mere emotion. It is, in the true sense, never well-informed. It is seldom intelligent, save in the arts of the mob-master. It is never courageously honest. Held harshly to a rigid correctness of opinion, it sinks rapidly into formalism and feebleness. Its yellow section is perhaps its best section, for there the only vestige of the old free journalist survives. In the more respectable papers one finds only a timid and petulant animosity to all questioning of the existing order, however urbane and sincere—a pervasive and ill-concealed dread that the mob now heated up against the orthodox hobgoblins may suddenly begin to unearth hobgoblins of its own, and so run amok. \* \* \*

1920

8. These were British thinkers and social reformers, yet also members of the "plutocracy." The economist, David Ricardo (1772-1823), was a successful broker; John Bright (1811-1889) and

Richard Cobden (1804-1865), the reformers, were industrialists; the historian, George Grote (1794-1871), was a banker.

## SHERWOOD ANDERSON

(1876-1941)

To the writers of the 1920's, Sherwood Anderson was a force and a pioneer, and he exercised an indirect influence on the lit-

erature of two decades. His unblemished powers are recognized today in a handful of magnificent short stories, in his per-

ceptive and passionate letters, and in three "autobiographies" whose legendary character is frankly acknowledged. His other books, particularly his novels, are confused in purpose and uneven in performance. Yet in whatever he wrote there is always the fascination of his personality, complex and brooding, groping for answers to the riddles of the individual being, and desperately aware that to find answers for others, he must overcome the disunity in his own experience. He is one of the most genuinely subjective of our story tellers, at his best in such narrative episodes as involve his own experience and perplexities.

Although largely self-educated, Anderson was a serious thinker, and he read widely. He was among the earliest to respond to the new Freudian psychology, and was convinced that much of human behavior is a reaction to subconscious realities and to experiences hidden in the forgotten past of the individual. His characters grope unsuccessfully to discover the reality within themselves, while with equal frustration they confront the complexities of the machine age and the conventionality of urban and small-town life. If they escape at all, even briefly, it may be through the experience of sex, although this escape also is often blocked by brutalizing debasements. Another resolution is sometimes found, as in *Dark Laughter* (1925), when man is able to identify himself simply with the primitive forces of nature.

Anderson was raised in Clyde, Ohio, the fourth of seven children of a harness-maker,

the "Windy" of his first novel, *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916). His schooling was sporadic, owing to his mother's need for help in supporting the family. What he learned working on farms, in shops, and especially in livery and racing stables later appeared in short stories that dealt generally with the emotional problems of boyhood. These are some of his most mature writings, reflecting the early conflict of his creative impulse with the spiritual poverty of small-town life and intimating the gradual alienation of his father which was a source of his chronic emotional disunity.

His mother died when Anderson was nineteen and the family fell apart. In 1896 he worked in Chicago. He enlisted for service in the Spanish-American War; after being discharged he spent the winter of 1899 in Springfield, Ohio, as a senior at Wittenberg Academy. In Chicago again, he became successful as an advertising writer and married in 1904. Moving to Cleveland in 1906, he acquired an interest in a factory in Elyria, Ohio, where he lived for five years. There he prospered financially, combining manufacturing with advertising while compensating for an inward revolt by writing drafts of three novels, including materials later published. In 1912 a nervous collapse required hospitalization. Now fully realizing his intense vocation for literature he terminated his business connections and the first of his four marriages.

In 1913 he started afresh in Chicago, writing advertising while giving his genuine efforts



to fiction. "The little renaissance" in Chicago provided a favorable *avant-garde* climate; Sandburg, Lindsay, and Masters were "new voices," and many "little magazines" were eager to give scope to original talent. In 1919 his fourth book, *Winesburg, Ohio*, a short-story collection, won international attention with its intense psychological studies of trapped and warped personalities and its pity and tenderness. In 1921, in Europe, he met and was influenced by James Joyce and Gertrude Stein; in New Orleans, the next winter, he met and influenced William Faulkner.

In *Dark Laughter* (1925), his best and only popular novel, Anderson satirizes the arid pseudo-sophisticated intellectuals, particularly in their neurotic debasement of sex, in contrast to the carefree and uncorrupted sensuality of the Negro characters in the story. But his novels are unsatisfactory as wholes, though they have pages of brilliance and even of sheer genius.

After 1925, Anderson's growing interest was in proletarian

movements and his novels declined. He now went to live near Marion, Virginia; in 1927, having bought two newspapers to edit there, he made Marion his permanent home. In 1941, at the start of a tour to South America, he died at Colon, Panama. His autobiographical reminiscences are excellent reading but so impressionistic that biographers have had to seek other sources.

Volumes of Anderson's short stories are *Winesburg, Ohio*, 1919; *The Triumph of the Egg*, 1921; *Horses and Men*, 1923; *Death in the Woods*, 1933. Anderson's novels are *Windy McPherson's Son*, 1916; *Marching Men*, 1917; *Poor White*, 1920; *Many Marriages*, 1923; *Dark Laughter*, 1925; *Beyond Desire*, 1932; *Kit Brandon*, 1936. His plays are collected in *Winesburg and Others*, 1937; his poems in *Mid-American Chants*, 1918; and *A New Testament*, 1927. Collections of essays are *The Modern Writer*, 1925; *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook*, 1926; *Hello Towns!* 1929; *Perhaps Women*, 1931; *No Swank*, 1934; *Puzzled America*, 1935. Autobiographical volumes are *A Story Teller's Story*, 1924; *Tar: A Midwest Childhood*, 1926; *Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs*, 1942. Correspondence on writing was collected in *Letters \* \* \**, ed. H. M. Jones and W. B. Rideout, 1953.

Studies are: I. Howe, *Sherwood Anderson*, 1951; and J. Schevill, *Sherwood Anderson, His Life and Work*, 1951.

## I Want to Know Why<sup>1</sup>

We got up at four in the morning, that first day in the east. On the evening before we had climbed off a freight train at the edge of town, and with the true instinct of Kentucky boys had found our way across town and to the race track and the stables at once. Then we knew we were all right. Hanley Turner right away found a nigger we knew. It was Bildad Johnson who in the winter works at Ed Becker's livery barn in our home town, Beckersville. Bildad is a good cook as almost all our niggers are and of course he, like everyone in our part of Kentucky who is anyone at all, likes the horses. In the spring Bildad begins to scratch around. A nigger from our country can flatter and wheedle anyone into letting him

1. First published in *The Smart Set* for November, 1918, and collected in *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921).

do most anything he wants. Bildad wheedles the stable men and the trainers from the horse farms in our country around Lexington. The trainers come into town in the evening to stand around and talk and maybe get into a poker game. Bildad gets in with them. He is always doing little favors and telling about things to eat, chicken browned in a pan, and how is the best way to cook sweet potatoes and corn bread. It makes your mouth water to hear him.

When the racing season comes on and the horses go to the races and there is all the talk on the streets in the evenings about the new colts, and everyone says when they are going over to Lexington or to the spring meeting at Churchill Downs or to Latonia, and the horsemen that have been down to New Orleans or maybe at the winter meeting at Havana in Cuba come home to spend a week before they start out again, at such a time when everything talked about in Beckersville is just horses and nothing else and the outfits start out and horse racing is in every breath of air you breathe, Bildad shows up with a job as cook for some outfit. Often when I think about it, his always going all season to the races and working in the livery barn in the winter where horses are and where men like to come and talk about horses, I wish I was a nigger. It's a foolish thing to say, but that's the way I am about being around horses, just crazy. I can't help it.

Well, I must tell you about what we did and let you in on what I'm talking about. Four of us boys from Beckersville, all whites and sons of men who live in Beckersville regular, made up our minds we were going to the races, not just to Lexington or Louisville, I don't mean, but to the big eastern track we were always hearing our Beckersville men talk about, to Saratoga. We were all pretty young then. I was just turned fifteen and I was the oldest of the four. It was my scheme. I admit that and I talked the others into trying it. There was Hanley Turner and Henry Rieback and Tom Tumber-ton and myself. I had thirty-seven dollars I had earned during the winter working nights and Saturdays in Enoch Myer's grocery. Henry Rieback had eleven dollars and the others, Hanley and Tom, had only a dollar or two each. We fixed it all up and laid low until the Kentucky spring meetings were over and some of our men, the sportiest ones, the ones we envied the most, had cut out—then we cut out too.

I won't tell you the trouble we had beating our way on freights and all. We went through Cleveland and Buffalo and other cities and saw Niagara Falls. We bought things there, souvenirs and spoons and cards and shells with pictures of the falls on them for our sisters and mothers, but thought we had better not send any of the things home. We didn't want to put the folks on our trail and maybe be nabbed.

We got into Saratoga as I said at night and went to the track. Bildad fed us up. He showed us a place to sleep in hay over a shed and promised to keep still. Niggers are all right about things like that. They won't squeal on you. Often a white man you might meet, when you had run away from home like that, might appear to be all right and give you a quarter or a half-dollar or something, and then go right and give you away. White men will do that, but not a nigger. You can trust them. They are squarer with kids. I don't know why.

At the Saratoga meeting that year there were a lot of men from home. Dave Williams and Arthur Mulford and Jerry Myers and others. Then there was a lot from Louisville and Lexington Henry Rieback knew but I didn't. They were professional gamblers and Henry Rieback's father is one too. He is what is called a sheet writer and goes away most of the year to tracks. In the winter when he is home in Beckersville he don't stay there much but goes away to cities and deals faro. He is a nice man and generous, is always sending Henry presents, a bicycle and a gold watch and a boy scout suit of clothes and things like that.

My own father is a lawyer. He's all right, but don't make much money and can't buy me things and anyway I'm getting so old now I don't expect it. He never said nothing to me against Henry, but Hanley Turner and Tom Tumberton's fathers did. They said to their boys that money so come by is no good and they didn't want their boys brought up to hear gamblers' talk and be thinking about such things and maybe embrace them.

That's all right and I guess the men know what they are talking about, but I don't see what it's got to do with Henry or with horses either. That's what I'm writing this story about. I'm puzzled. I'm getting to be a man and want to think straight and be O. K., and there's something I saw at the race meeting at the eastern track I can't figure out.

I can't help it, I'm crazy about thoroughbred horses. I've always been that way. When I was ten years old and saw I was growing to be big and couldn't be a rider I was so sorry I nearly died. Harry Hellinfinger in Beckersville, whose father is Postmaster, is grown up and too lazy to work, but likes to stand around in the street and get up jokes on boys like sending them to a hardware store for a gimlet to bore square holes and other jokes like that. He played one on me. He told me that if I would eat a half a cigar I would be stunted and not grow any more and maybe could be a rider. I did it. When father wasn't looking I took a cigar out of his pocket and gagged it down some way. It made me awful sick and the doctor had to be sent for, and then it did no good. I kept right on growing. It was a joke. When I told what I had done and why most fathers

would have whipped me but mine didn't.

Well, I didn't get stunted and didn't die. It serves Harry Hellin-finger right. Then I made up my mind I would like to be a stable boy, but had to give that up too. Mostly niggers do that work and I knew father wouldn't let me go into it. No use to ask him.

If you've never been crazy about thoroughbreds it's because you've never been around where they are much and don't know any better. They're beautiful. There isn't anything so lovely and clean and full of spunk and honest and everything as some race horses. On the big horse farms that are all around our town Beckersville there are tracks and the horses run in the early morning. More than a thousand times I've got out of bed before daylight and walked two or three miles to the tracks. Mother wouldn't let me go but father always says, "Let him alone." So I got some bread out of the bread box and some butter and jam, gobbled it and lit out.

At the tracks you sit on the fence with men, whites and niggers, and they chew tobacco and talk, and then the colts are brought out. It's early and the grass is covered with shiny dew and in another field a man is plowing and they are frying things in a shed where the track niggers sleep, and you know how a nigger can giggle and laugh and say things that make you laugh. A white man can't do it and some niggers can't but a track nigger can every time.

And so the colts are brought out and some are just galloped by stable boys, but almost every morning on a big track owned by a rich man who lives maybe in New York, there are always, nearly every morning, a few colts and some of the old race horses and geldings and mares that are cut loose.

It brings a lump up into my throat when a horse runs. I don't mean all horses but some. I can pick them nearly every time. It's in my blood like in the blood of race track niggers and trainers. Even when they just go slob-jogging along with a little nigger on their backs I can tell a winner. If my throat hurts and it's hard for me to swallow, that's him. He'll run like Sam Hill when you let him out. If he don't win every time it'll be a wonder and because they've got him in a pocket behind another or he was pulled or got off bad at the post or something. If I wanted to be a gambler like Henry Rieback's father I could get rich. I know I could and Henry says so, too. All I would have to do is to wait 'til that hurt comes when I see a horse and then bet every cent. That's what I would do if I wanted to be a gambler, but I don't.

When you're at the tracks in the morning—not the race tracks but the training tracks around Beckersville—you don't see a horse, the kind I've been talking about, very often, but it's nice anyway. Any thoroughbred, that is sired right and out of a good mare and trained by a man that knows how, can run. If he couldn't what

would he be there for and not pulling a plow?

Well, out of the stables they come and the boys are on their backs and it's lovely to be there. You hunch down on top of the fence and itch inside you. Over in the sheds the niggers giggle and sing. Bacon is being fried and coffee made. Everything smells lovely. Nothing smells better than coffee and manure and horses and niggers and bacon frying and pipes being smoked out of doors on a morning like that. It just gets you, that's what it does.

But about Saratoga. We was there six days and not a soul from home seen us and everything came off just as we wanted it to, fine weather and horses and races and all. We beat our way home and Bildad gave us a basket with fried chicken and bread and other catables in, and I had eighteen dollars when we got back to Beckersville. Mother jawed and cried but Pop didn't say much. I told everything we done except one thing. I did and saw that alone. That's what I'm writing about. It got me upset. I think about it at night. Here it is.

At Saratoga we laid up nights in the hay in the shed Bildad had showed us and ate with the niggers early and at night when the race people had all gone away. The men from home stayed mostly in the grandstand and betting field, and didn't come out around the places where the horses are kept except to the paddocks just before a race when the horses are saddled. At Saratoga they don't have paddocks under an open shed as at Lexington and Churchill Downs and other tracks down in our country, but saddle the horses right out in an open place under trees on a lawn as smooth and nice as Banker Bohon's front yard here in Beckersville. It's lovely. The horses are sweaty and nervous and shine and the men come out and smoke cigars and look at them and the trainers are there and the owners, and your heart thumps so you can hardly breathe.

Then the bugle blows for post and the boys that ride come running out with their silk clothes on and you run to get a place by the fence with the niggers.

I always am wanting to be a trainer or owner, and at the risk of being seen and caught and sent home I went to the paddocks before every race. The other boys didn't but I did.

We got to Saratoga on a Friday and on Wednesday the next week the big Mullford Handicap was to be run. Middlestride was in it and Sunstreak. The weather was fine and the track fast. I couldn't sleep the night before.

What had happened was that both these horses are the kind it makes my throat hurt to see. Middlestride is long and looks awkward and is a gelding. He belongs to Joc Thompson, a little owner from home who only has a half-dozen horses. The Mullford Handicap is for a mile and Middlestride can't untrack fast. He goes away

slow and is always way back at the half, then he begins to run and if the race is a mile and a quarter he'll just eat up everything and get there.

Sunstreak is different. He is a stallion and nervous and belongs on the biggest farm we've got in our country, the Van Riddle place that belongs to Mr. Van Riddle of New York. Sunstreak is like a girl you think about sometimes but never see. He is hard all over and lovely too. When you look at his head you want to kiss him. He is trained by Jerry Tillford who knows me and has been good to me lots of times, lets me walk into a horse's stall to look at him close and other things. There isn't anything as sweet as that horse. He stands at the post quiet and not letting on, but he is just burning up inside. Then when the barrier goes up he is off like his name, Sunstreak. It makes you ache to see him. It hurts you. He just lays down and runs like a bird dog. There can't anything I ever see run like him except Middlestride when he gets untracked and stretches himself.

Gee! I ached to see that race and those two horses run, ached and dreaded it too. I didn't want to see either of our horses beaten. We had never sent a pair like that to the races before. Old men in Beckersville said so and the niggers said so. It was a fact.

Before the race I went over to the paddocks to see. I looked a last look at Middlestride, who isn't such a much standing in a paddock that way, then I went to see Sunstreak.

It was his day. I knew when I see him. I forgot all about being seen myself and walked right up. All the men from Beckersville were there and no one noticed me except Jerry Tillford. He saw me and something happened. I'll you about that.

I was standing looking at that horse and aching. In some way, I can't tell how, I knew just how Sunstreak felt inside. He was quiet and letting the niggers rub his legs and Mr. Van Riddle himself put the saddle on, but he was just a raging torrent inside. He was like the water in the river at Niagara Falls just before it goes plunk down. That horse wasn't thinking about running. He don't have to think about that. He was just thinking about holding himself back 'til the time for the running came. I knew that. I could just in a way see right inside him. He was going to do some awful running and I knew it. He wasn't bragging or letting on much or prancing or making a fuss, but just waiting. I knew it and Jerry Tillford his trainer knew. I looked up and then that man and I looked into each other's eyes. Something happened to me. I guess I loved the man as much as I did the horse because he knew what I knew. Seemed to me there wasn't anything in the world but that man and the horse and me. I cried and Jerry Tillford had a shine in his eyes. Then I came away to the fence to wait for the race. The horse was

better than me, more steadier, and now I know better than Jerry. He was the quietest and he had to do the running.

Sunstreak ran first of course and he busted the world's record for a mile. I've seen that if I never see anything more. Everything came out just as I expected. Middlestride got left at the post and was way back and closed up to be second, just as I knew he would. He'll get a world's record too some day. They can't skin the Beckersville country on horses.

I watched the race calm because I knew what would happen. I was sure. Hanley Turner and Henry Rieback and Tom Tumberton were all more excited than me.

A funny thing had happened to me. I was thinking about Jerry Tillford the trainer and how happy he was all through the race. I liked him that afternoon even more than I ever liked my own father. I almost forgot the horses thinking that way about him. It was because of what I had seen in his eyes as he stood in the paddocks beside Sunstreak before the race started. I knew he had been watching and working with Sunstreak since the horse was a baby colt, had taught him to run and be patient and when to let himself out and not to quit, never. I knew that for him it was like a mother seeing her child do something brave or wonderful. It was the first time I ever felt for a man like that.

After the race that night I cut out from Tom and Hanley and Henry. I wanted to be by myself and I wanted to be near Jerry Tillford if I could work it. Here is what happened.

The track in Saratoga is near the edge of town. It is all polished up and trees around, the evergreen kind, and grass and everything painted and nice. If you go past the track you get to a hard road made of asphalt for automobiles, and if you go along this for a few miles there is a road turns off to a little rummy-looking farm house set in a yard.

That night after the race I went along that road because I had seen Jerry and some other men go that way in an automobile. I didn't expect to find them. I walked for a ways and then sat down by a fence to think. It was the direction they went in. I wanted to be as near Jerry as I could. I felt close to him. Pretty soon I went up the side road—I don't know why—and came to the rummy farm house. I was just lonesome to see Jerry, like wanting to see your father at night when you are a young kid. Just then an automobile came along and turned in. Jerry was in it and Henry Rieback's father, and Arthur Bedford from home, and Dave Williams and two other men I didn't know. They got out of the car and went into the house, all but Henry Rieback's father who quarreled with them and said he wouldn't go. It was only about nine o'clock, but they were all drunk and the rummy-looking farm house was a

place for bad women to stay in. That's what it was. I crept up along a fence and looked through a window and saw.

It's what give me the fantods. I can't make it out. The women in the house were all ugly mean-looking women, not nice to look at or be near. They were homely too, except one who was tall and looked a little like the gelding Middlestride, but not clean like him, but with a hard ugly mouth. She had red hair. I saw everything plain. I got up by an old rose bush by an open window and looked. The women had on loose dresses and sat around in chairs. The men came in and some sat on the women's laps. The place smelled rotten and there was rotten talk, the kind a kid hears around a livery stable in a town like Beckersville in the winter but don't ever expect to hear talked when there are women around. It was rotten. A nigger wouldn't go into such a place.

I looked at Jerry Tillford. I've told you how I had been feeling about him on account of his knowing what was going on inside of Sunstreak in the minute before he went to the post for the race in which he made a world's record.

Jerry bragged in that bad woman house as I know Sunstreak wouldn't never have bragged. He said that he made that horse, that it was him that won the race and made the record. He lied and bragged like a fool. I never heard such silly talk.

And then, what do you suppose he did! He looked at the woman in there, the one that was lean and hard-mouthed and looked a little like the gelding Middlestride, but not clean like him, and his eyes began to shine just as they did when he looked at me and at Sunstreak in the paddocks at the track in the afternoon. I stood there by the window—gee!—but I wished I hadn't gone away from the tracks, but had stayed with the boys and the niggers and the horses. The tall rotten-looking woman was between us just as Sunstreak was in the paddocks in the afternoon.

Then, all of a sudden, I began to hate that man. I wanted to scream and rush in the room and kill him. I never had such a feeling before. I was so mad clean through that I cried and my fists were doubled up so my finger nails cut my hands.

And Jerry's eyes kept shining and he waved back and forth, and then he went and kissed that woman and I crept away and went back to the tracks and to bed and didn't sleep hardly any, and then next day I got the other kids to start home with me and never told them anything I seen.

I been thinking about it ever since. I can't make it out. Spring has come again and I'm nearly sixteen and go to the tracks mornings same as always, and I see Sunstreak and Middlestride and a new colt named Strident I'll bet will lay them all out, but no one thinks so but me and two or three niggers.



But things are different. At the tracks the air don't taste as good or smell as good. It's because a man like Jerry Tillford, who knows what he does, could see a horse like Sunstreak run, and kiss a woman like that the same day. I can't make it out. Darn him, what did he want to do like that for? I keep thinking about it and it spoils looking at horses and smelling things and hearing niggers laugh and everything. Sometimes I'm so mad about it I want to fight someone. It gives me the fantods. What did he do it for? I want to know why.

1918, 1921

## SINCLAIR LEWIS

(1885-1951)

Sinclair Lewis was the leading satirist of his generation. He "reported" American life, always on the lookout for a "good story"—a story of immediate topical value.

What he sacrificed by this approach was philosophical depth and perspective. Yet he was a writer of high ideals and courage. Much of his criticism was leveled at abuses badly in need of correction, and in some cases it is likely that his novels helped to stimulate the public to remedy them. He was a gifted wielder of words, and gave to the language such ineradicable terms of opprobrium as "rotarian," "main-street," and "babbitry"—the last two derived from the titles of his first novels.

These famous books, *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922), opened his attack upon what he regarded as the root of failure and corruption in our society. This was the inherent materialism that brought us, in Oscar Wilde's phrase, to know "the price of everything and the

value of nothing," to own so much while possessing so little, to take comfort in our genius for inventing all sorts of satisfactions for needs that we did not have, while neglecting to recognize, let alone to satisfy, the needs of the human spirit. Readers today disagree sharply as to the justice of these criticisms, but in 1920 Lewis sprang at once into a position of authority with American readers, while Europeans, generally suspicious of American culture in the first place, took him so seriously that he was chosen in 1930 as the first American writer to receive the Nobel Prize of the Swedish Academy.

Harry Sinclair Lewis was born on February 7, 1885 in Sauk Center, Minnesota, the "Gopher Prairie" of *Main Street*. He was nineteen when he entered Yale, and he interrupted his studies for two trips to Europe on cattle boats and for long tramping excursions through the eastern states and Mexico. When he received his degree with the class

of 1907 at Yale, he was nearly twenty-three, and had connections in New York as a hack writer of magazine verse, humor, and juveniles. After a trip to Panama, partly by steerage and partly as a stowaway, he returned to New York as a publisher's reader, made his first marriage, and wrote his first novel. *Our Mr. Wrenn* (1914) is in the manner of H. G. Wells, combining whimsy with social purpose. Four lesser novels and a play were completed before *Main Street* appeared.

In this novel, for the first time, he was able to devote his brilliant satire and his genius for the memorable phrase to a subject of immediate popular interest. The "attack on the village," the satire of the "small-town mind," had already appeared in British literature; and among American writers, Edgar Lee Masters in his *Spoon River Anthology*, and Anderson in *Winesburg, Ohio* had notably drawn the first blood. But no other writer had brought to the fray Lewis' pyrotechnical combination of narrative sophistication, satirical brilliance, and mirth-provoking mimicry. Within a year the book had swept the country, and the author's fortune was made. As with many of Lewis' themes, this was ephemeral. The automobile age was dawning, and within fifteen years the American small town was to become quite another thing, with quite another set of problems. In 1922, *Babbitt*, satirizing the Rotarian and go-getter, had a subject of somewhat more per-

manent interest, for it may be that babbittry has changed only its objectives, not its spirit. In spite of his sardonic humor, Dickensian caricature, and devastating mimicry of American jargon, Lewis created a pathetic reality and appeal in *George Babbitt*. With somewhat less success he re-created the character in Lowell Schmalz of *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* (1928).

Lewis poured out his novels, fifteen of them between 1920 and his death in 1951. In *Arrowsmith* (1925) he found a subject of considerable human warmth—the idealism of the devoted scientist and physician in conflict with the forces that attempt to sensationalize his work or to commercialize and monopolize his discoveries. In *Martin Arrowsmith*, his wife, Leora, and Dr. Max Gottlieb, he gave us his most fully developed and enduring characters. The book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, which the author declined, asserting that the award, because it was made for a representation of the "wholesome aspect of American life," tended to restrict freedom of thought. In 1928, having been divorced, Lewis married Dorothy Thompson, the journalist. That marriage was terminated in 1942.

After *Arrowsmith*, Lewis' work declined for several years. *Mantrap* (1926) is negligible. *Elmer Gantry* (1927), an angry attack on the hypocritical and money-minded evangelist, was a sensational success primarily because of certain current scandals. *Dodsworth* (1929) was his last

notable contribution. As in *Arrowsmith*, he had found a subject of enduring human interest, a theme involving moral integrity, rather than one of merely topical importance. Sam Dodsworth, who suddenly discovered that he was making the best in automobiles but failing to make anything of himself, is a fully embodied and convincing character, while Fran, his mean and selfish wife, is a real and tragic figure in her failure to join him in a search for selfhood. As a play written in collaboration with Sidney Howard, the story made an excellent drama on the stage in 1935. *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) warned Americans that one of their native demagogues might be as dangerous as the European dictators who were then seizing power; *Gideon Planish* (1943) was an exposé of the potential chicanery of the academic profession and of organized philanthropies in the hands of charlatans, but it was not sufficiently well studied, and had no character interest; *Cass Timberlane* (1945) was a mildly interesting domestic novel; and *Kingsblood Royal* (1947) was a study of the persecution of a Negro family in a white neighborhood. Lewis died in Rome, after several years of declining health, in 1951.

Sinclair Lewis was a liberating force upon the literature of the

1920's; with an inventive and courageous critical mind, he was a stalwart crusader against the encroaching materialism which tolerated moral slackness, vulgarity, ignorance, and narrow bigotry in conformity with a pattern of superficial success cheaply won. He remained throughout life one of the most high-minded and respected of our authors. But it seems that his literary reputation may ultimately be determined by only four of his many books—*Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, and *Dodsworth*—the volumes in which, no matter how misguided the characters may be, they are endowed with three-dimensional reality and with the quality in lost creatures that evokes our pity as much as our contempt.

Lewis's principal volumes include *Main Street*, 1920; *Babbitt*, 1922; *Arrowsmith*, 1925; *Mantrap*, 1926; *Elmer Gantry*, 1927; *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*, 1928; *Dodsworth*, 1929; *Ann Vickers*, 1933; *Work of Art*, 1934; *Selected Short Stories*, 1935; *It Can't Happen Here*, 1935; *Jayhawkers: A Play in Three Acts* (with Lloyd Lewis), 1935; *The Prodigal Parents*, 1938; *Bethel Merriday*, 1940; *Gideon Planish*, 1943; *Cass Timberlane*, 1945; *Kingsblood Royal*, 1947; *The God-Seeker*, 1949; *World So Wide*, posthumously published in 1951; *The Man from Main Street*, 1953, posthumously collected sketches, some with biographical interest. Harrison Smith edited *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis, 1919-1930*, 1952.

An early biographical account is Carl Van Doren's *Sinclair Lewis*, 1933. Grace Hegger Lewis published a memoir, *With Love from Gracie* \* \* \*, 1955.

## From You Know How Women Are<sup>1</sup>

—And I tell you, Walt, now we have a chance to sit down here by ourselves in your den and have a real chat—and say, from what

1. "You Know How Women Are" is one of five sketches dealing with the same character, and ultimately assembled in

one volume, *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* (1928), from which the present text has been taken. This book

I've seen, I don't believe there's a more elegant house for its size in Troy, and then of course you always were my favorite cousin, and one of the few people whose business judgment I'd trust and—

If you can see your way clear to making this loan, you'll never regret it. Business hasn't gone quite so good the last six months, as I admitted, but now I've got the exclusive Zenith agency for Zenith<sup>2</sup> for these new cash registers—and say, what the cash register means, what it *means* to the modern and efficient conduct of business; it's almost, you might say, the symbol of modern industry, like the sword is of war—now I've got that, I can guarantee a big increase in turnover, taking one thing with another, and I want you to examine the analysis of my business with the greatest care.

And I certainly do admit all your criticisms, and I'm going to ponder on 'em and try to profit by 'em. \* \* \*

And I don't think that even you, with all the insight that you show into human nature, quite understand how and why it is that in certain moods I do run on a good deal. There's reasons for it. \* \* \*

I hate to say it, and there isn't another human being living, Walt, that I'd tell this to, and I want you to treat it as strictly confidential, but—

The fact is, what really cramps my style is my wife.

That girl—

And in many ways I've got nothing but praise for Mamie. She means well, and as far as her lights lead her, she does everything she can for me, but the fact is she don't quite understand me, and say, the way she drives me and makes demands on me and everything, why say, it just about drives me crazy.

And Delmerine same way. Thinking the Old Man's *made* of money!

And what I've done for Mamie—yes, and what modern American science has done! Think of the advantage of canned goods, of delicatessen shops with every delicacy from salads to cold turkey, all ready to serve without any preparation; of baker's bread without having to bake bread at home. Think of the electric dish-washing machine, reducing the work of dish-washing to, you might say, practically a minimum, and the vacuum cleaner, and what an invention *that* is!—no more sweeping, no more beating rugs—why rounds out Lewis' first period, resembling its prototype, *Babbitt* (1922). In the endless sales talk that Schmaltz substitutes for conversation, he shows that the fact that he "knew" President Coolidge, before flunking out of their alma mater, gives him a sense of importance by association that assuages his pauperized, Raggedy Andy soul.

"You Know How Women Are," the central narrative, in its portrayal of Schmaltz's sporadic impulse to seek some sort of value in life, evokes, as *Babbitt* does, a dash of pity for this stereotyped slave of Philistia.

2. In *Babbitt* and *Dodsworth*, Lewis had also set the scene in the imaginary midwestern city of Zenith.

say, the preachers can talk about these mysteries and all like that, but I guess in the vacuum cleaner America has added to the world *its* own mystery, that'll last when the columns of the Acropolis have crumbled to mere dust!

And then think of the modern laundries with their marvelous machinery.

It's true that they don't wash the clothes quite as good as my old mother used to—fact, they simply tear hell out of my handkerchiefs, and I always was a man to appreciate a high grade of fine linen handkerchief. But still, think of the labor-saving.

And so I've provided Mame with every device to save her labor, so whether it's a question of her telling the maid what to do, or during those comparatively rare intervals when we haven't got a hired girl and she has to do some of the work herself, she can get it all done in a jiffy, you might say, and be free for all the pleasures and self-improvement of leisure. She's free to play bridge nearly every afternoon, and also to give a lot of attention to her literary club, the William Lyon Phelps Ladies' Book and Literary Society,<sup>4</sup> and get a lot of culture.

Now myself, I've always given a lot of attention to intellectual matters. Of course I'm right up on history—I've read clear through both Wells' "Outline of History," or practically clear through it, and also Van Lear's "Story of Mankind,"<sup>5</sup> especially studying the illustrations. And of course—maybe I'm a little rusty on it now, but as a boy I used to be able to chatter German like a native, you might say, as my father often talked it to us at home. And now I'm kind of specializing on philosophy. I've read a lot of this "Story of Philosophy" by—I can't at the moment exactly remember the professor's name,<sup>6</sup> but it gives you the whole contents of all philosophy in one book; and while these business cares have for the moment interrupted my reading the book, I expect to go right on and finish it. \* \* \*

But I'm getting away from my subject. To return to Mame:

Aside from her apparently not wanting me to be anything whatsoever around the house except the guy that pays the bills and carves the duck and fixes the furnace and drives her car out of the garage so she can go off to a hen bridge-party, here lately we've got into kind of a bad way of quarreling.

Well, here's an example:

We used to have dogs for quite a while after we were married,

4. Professor Phelps of Yale, who died in 1943, became a brilliant popularizer of literature through his extensive lecture tours and public readings.

5. In 1920, H. G. Wells published his enormously successful *Outline of History*, thus initiating a host of outlines

of everything, most of them intended for the quick education of the ignoramus. *The Story of Mankind* (1921), was actually written by Hendrik Willem Van Loon.

6. By Will Durant; published in 1926.

and I always did like to have a good dog around the house. Kind of gives you somebody to talk to when you come home and there ain't anybody around—just sits and listens while you explain things to him, and looks like he *understood*! But here about six years ago, just at a moment when we didn't happen to have a dog, somebody gave Mrs. Schmaltz—gave Mamie, I mean—a very fine expensive cat by the name Minnie—not exactly a full-bred Persian, I guess, but pretty full-bred at that.

But at the same time, even appreciating how much money she was worth, I never did *like* that damn' cat!

You see, we also had a canary, a very valuable little canary named Dicky, a real genuwine Hertz Mountains canary, and intelligent—say, there's those that say a canary isn't intelligent, but I want to tell you that that canary *knew* me, and when I'd stand near the cage he'd chirp just like he was talking to me.

He was a lot of comfort to me, not having a dog at that time—I was looking for a high-class English setter, and hadn't been able to find one at the price I felt justified in paying.

Well sir, here was a surprising thing. We fed that cat and fed her—I'd hate to tot up all the money we've paid out for milk and meat for that cat—but even so, she was bound and determined she was going to get at that poor little canary. She'd hang around underneath the cage and look up at Dicky, absolutely bloodthirsty, and one time when somebody (and I always thought it was Mame did it herself, too, and not the hired girl)—when somebody left a chair right practically under the cage, Minnie lep' up on the chair and absolutely did her best to leap up and get at the cage.

Of course Mame and I had words about that—

And then that damn' cat never *would* be friendly, at least not to me.

I used to say to Mame, "Well, what does the fool cat *do* for its living, anyway? Think we're sent into the world just to loaf around and enjoy ourselves and sponge on other people?" I says.

Wouldn't sit in my lap—no sir, not for a minute. I used to get so sore at that cat that I'd kick it good and plenty hard, when nobody was looking—I showed it its place, by God—and *still* I couldn't get it to be friendly.

And we talked a lot about it, about the cat and the canary, and one thing often led to another—

*You* know how it is.

And when I talked about getting another dog, no *sir*, Mame wouldn't hear to it—said a dog would frighten her itty, bittly, sweetsy, bitsy, high-hatting, canary-murdering damn' *cat*, by God!

Well, I made up my mind that I was going to be master in my own household, but— Oh well, things just kind of floated along

for several months, and I didn't do anything special about buying a dog, and then one day—

I remember just like it was yesterday. I'd been out to the country club for a few holes of golf—I remember I was playing with Joe Minchin, the machinery king, Willis Ijams, our leading—or certainly one of the leading hardware dealers, and fellow named George Babbitt, the great real-estate dealer. But I was driving home alone, and I remember there was something wrong—car kept kind of bucking—couldn't exactly figure out what it was, so I stops the car right by the side of the road—it was late autumn—and I lifts the hood and I'm trying to figure out what's wrong when I hears a kind of a whining and a whimpering, and I looks down, and by golly there's a nice water spaniel—not very old, not more'n say two or maybe nearer two and a half years old, sitting there and looking up at me so pathetic—say, it was absolutely pathetic. And he held up his paw like it'd been hurt.

"Well, what's the trouble, old man?" I says to him.

And he looks up, so intelligent— By golly, I just loved that damn' tyke. Well, make a long story short, I looks at his paw, and way I figured it out, he'd cut it on some broken glass—but not bad. Fortunately I had some old but clean rags there in the door-pocket of the car, and so I sat down on the running-board and kind of bound up his paw, and meantime I noticed—and a good, high-grade dog he was, too—I noticed he didn't have any collar or license or anything. And when I'd finished, doggoned if he didn't jump up into my sedan like he belonged there.

"Well, who d'you think you are?" I says to him. "What are you trying to do, you old hijacker," I says to him. "Steal my car? Poor old Pop Schmaltz with his car stolen," I says.

And he just curls up on the back seat and wags his tail, much as to say, "You're a great little kidder, but I know which side my meat is buttered on."

Well, I looks up and down the road and there wasn't anybody in sight that looked like they were looking for a dog, and there was only a couple of houses in sight, and when I got the car to acting Christian again—seems the carburetor needed a little adjusting—I drives to both these houses, and *they* didn't know nothing about no lost dog, so I says, "Well, don't like to leave old Jackie here—"

That's what I named the pup, and that's what I call him to this very day.

"I'd better not leave him here to get run over," thinks I, "and when we get back home, I'll advertize and see if I can find his owner."

Well, when I got home, Robby—you remember my boy, Walt—Robby was just as crazy about having a dog as I was, but Mame

gets sniffy about how the dog'd scare that damn' cat Minnie of hers. But she let me keep Jackie, that's the dog, out in the garage till I'd advertised.

Well, I advertised and I advertised—

No, come to think of it, I guess it was just one ad I put in, because I thinks to myself, "Jackie looks to me like a regular man's dog, and if his owner ain't keeping a look-out, can't expect *me* to do all the work!"

Anyway, never got an answer, and in 'long about a week, Mame wakes up and begins to realize, here I am with a dog that ain't going to be buddies with her cat—and say, was she right? Say, the first time Minnie comes pce-rading out on the lawn to see if she can't murder a few sparrows, Jackie, his paw was well enough for that, he takes one look at her, and say, honest, you'd 've laughed fit to bust; he chases her 'way clean up our elm tree, and keeps her there, too, by golly.

Well, after that, there was a hell of a powwow with Big Chief Wife, and no peace-pipe in sight. She gets me in the house, away from Robby, who'd 've backed me up, and she rides the wild mustango up and down the living-room, and throws her tomahawk into the tortured victims, meaning me, and she says:

"Lowell Schmaltz, I've told you, and if I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times, that Minnie is a *very* sensitive and high-bred cat, and I will not have her nerves all shattered by being annoyed by a lot of horrid dogs. I want you to find the rightful owner of this horrid dog and give him back."

"Give who back? The owner?" I says, just sitting down and lighting a cigar and trying to look like I was amused and there was nothing she could do or say that would get my goat. And of course I had her there: "Give who back? The owner?" I says.

"You know perfectly well and good what I mean," she says. "And I want you to find the horrid thing's owner at once!"

"Fine!" I says. "Sure! Of course all I've done is to advertise extensively in the *Advocate-Times*, which only has more circulation than any other two papers in this territory put together—or so they claim, and I've looked into it and I'm disposed to accept their figures," I says. "But of course that isn't enough. All right, I'll just tuck Jackie under my arm, and start right out— Let's see," I says, "there's only about six hundred thousand people in Zenith and the neighboring towns, within perhaps a twenty-eight or thirty mile radius of City Hall, and all I'll have to do will be to run around to *each* of 'em and say, 'Hey, mister, lost a dog?' That's all I'll have to do."

"Well, then, you can take the horrid beast out where you found him and leave him there," she says.



"I can, and I ain't going to," I says—flat. "I'm not going to have him run over by some damn' fool careless motorist," I says. "He's a valuable dog," I says.

"He's horrid—and he's terribly dirty. I never did see such a terribly dirty dog," she says.

"Oh, sure," I says. "Of course aside from the notorious fact that he's a water spaniel—and water spaniels' being, even if they ain't at present as fashionable as cocker spaniels or wire-haired terriers or Airdales, merely notoriously the cleanest dogs that exist," I says, "aside from that, you're dead right."

"But we don't need a dog anyway," she says.

Well say, that kind of got my goat.

"No," I says, "sure we don't. I don't, anyway. Think what I've got here to be chummy with in the evening. Elegant! This nice, fluffy, expensive feline cat, that hates me like hell, that won't sit in my lap, that cottons to you because you got nothing to do all day but stay home and pet it, while I have to be in my store, working my head off—to support a damn' cat! I'inc!" I says. \* \* \*

But you know how things go. One morning I gets up early and has breakfast by myself, and there's Jackie whining outside, and I takes a chance and lets him in and feeds him, and that cat comes marching into the room like a Episcopalopian rector leading a procession, and Jackie gets one squint at her and chases her up on the buffet, and just then Mamie comes in and—

Say, I didn't stop with no buffet; I didn't stop till I'd reached the top of the Second National Bank Tower. But seriously, though, she certainly give Jackie and me such an earful that—

Well, Joe Minchin had planned a poker party for that evening and I hadn't kind of intended to go, but Mame bawled hell out of me so at breakfast that later in the day I said I'd go, and I went, and I got lit to the eyebrows, if the truth be known—say, I was simply ossified.

So I comes home late, thinking I was both the King and Queen of Sheba, and then I got dizzy and just about the time Mame'd thought up her adjectives and was ready to describe me for the catalogue of domestic sons of guns, I couldn't tarry, oh, no longer—I had to be wending my way into the bathroom P.D.Q.,<sup>2</sup> and there, say, I lost everything but my tonsils. Wow!

Well, Mame was awful' nice to me. She helped me back into bed, and she bathed my forehead, and she got some black coffee for me—only what I wanted was a good cyanide of potassium cocktail—and when I woke up in the morning she just kind of

2. An abbreviation then colloquially employed as a genteel substitute for "pretty damn quick."

laughed, and I thought I was going to get by without the matrimonial cat-o'-nine-tails—I actually thought that, and me married over twenty years to her!

So when my head gets itself reduced to not more'n six or seven normal times its ordinary or wearing size, and I gets up for breakfast, not more'n twenty or twenty-two hours late, and she's still bright and—oh God, what a blessing!—still keeping her trap shut and not telling me about salvation, why, I thinks I'm safe, and then just when I stagger up from breakfast and thinks I'll go down to my store, if I can remember where I left my garage last night, why, she smiles brighter'n ever, and says in a nice, sweet, cool, Frigidaire voice:

"Sit down a moment, will you please, Low. There's something I want to say to you."

Well—

Oh, I died with my face to the foemen. I tried to take the barricades in one gallant dash, like Douglas Fairbanks.<sup>3</sup> I says briefly, "I know what you want to say," I says. "You want to say I was lit, last night. Say, that isn't any news. By this time it's so old and well known that you can find it among the problems in the sixth-grade arithmetic book," I says. "Look here," I says, "it wasn't entirely my fault. It was that God-awful bootleg hootch I got at Joe's. It'd been all right if it'd been honest liquor."

"You were *disgusting*," she says. "If my poor father and mother hadn't passed away, and if my sister Edna wasn't such a crank about theosophy that nobody could live with her, I'd 've left you before dawn, let me tell you that."

Well, I got sore. I'm not a very bad-tempered cuss, as you know, but after along about twenty years, this threatening-to-leave-you business gets a little tiresome.

"Fine," I says. "You're always blowing about how much you know about clothes. I'll be glad to give you a knock-down to some of the big guys at Benson, Hanley and Koch's," I says, "and probably they'll make you buyer in the ladies' garments department," I says, "and you won't have to go on standing for a gorilla of a husband like me."

And she says all right, by God she'll do it!

And we seesaw back and forth, and I kind of apologizes, and she says she didn't mean it, and then we really gets down to business.

"But just the same," she says, "I'm not going to have that dog in the house again! You've not got the least consideration for my feelings. You talk so much about your dear old friends, like this

3. Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. (died 1939), famous for his acrobatic gallantry in films of romantic adventure.

horrible Joe Minchin, but you never give one moment's thought to what I need or like. You don't know what the word 'thoughtfulness' means."

"All right, I'll look it up in the dictionary," I says. "And speaking of *thoughtfulness*," I says, "when I was going out last night, I found you'd been using my safety razor and hadn't cleaned it, and I was in a hurry and you'd neglected— By God," I says, "when I was a boy, a man had his sweaters to himself, without his wife or sister calmly up and using 'em, and he had his razor to himself, and he had his barber-shop to himself—"

"Yes, and he had his saloons to himself, and still has," she comes back at me. "And you talk about neglect! It isn't only me you neglect," she says, "when you go and get full of liquor, and it isn't simply the example you set the children, but it's the way you neglect the church and religion," she says.

"And of course I'm only a deacon in the church," I says. You know—sarcastic.

"Yes, and you know mighty good and well you only took the job because it'd give you a stand-in with the religious folks, and every Sunday you can, you sneak off and play golf instead of going to church. And that morning when Dr. Hickenlooper came in from Central Methodist and preached for us—that time when poor Dr. Edwards was sick and couldn't preach himself—"

"Sick? He was sick like a fox," I told her. "He just had a sore throat because he'd been off on a lecture trip, shooting his mouth off before a lot of women's clubs to rake in some extra dough, when he ought to stayed home here and tended to his job."

"That's entirely aside from the question," she says, "and anyway, instead of listening to Dr. Hickenlooper like you ought to, you and a couple other deacons stayed out in the lobby of the church."

"Yuh, there's something to what you say," I told her. "Hickenlooper is a fine man. He's all for charity—providing some rich man provides the money for the charity. I don't believe he's ever smoked a cigar or had a nip of liquor in his life. He's a credit to the Methodist clergy. It's true he does bawl out his wife and his kids all the time, and it's true he nags his secretary all day long, but you can't blame a man that's busy with the Lord's work for being maybe a little irritable. In fact there's only one trouble with the holy man—he's the worst and most consistent liar in seven counties!"

"I've heard him tell as his own experience things I know he read in books, because I've seen the books. And here's a story that our own pastor, Edwards, told us. Seems Hickenlooper met him in front of our church one Monday morning, and Hickenlooper says, 'Well, Dr. Edwards, my brother-in-law heard you preach yesterday,

and he said it was the best sermon he ever heard in his life.'

"'Well, that's nice,' Dr. Edwards says, 'but it just happens that I didn't preach yesterday.'

"I guess I'm a kind of a blowhard," I says to Mamie, "and in general I'm just a plug business man, while Hickenlooper addresses Chautauquas and addresses colleges and addresses Methodist conferences and writes articles for the magazines and writes lovely books about how chummy he and God and the sunsets are, but say, if that holy liar knew what even poor, ordinary business men like me really thought about him and what they said privately, he'd sneak off to a desert and never open his mouth again!"

Well say, that had Mamie wild—and don't you think for one moment, Walt, that she let me get by without a few interruptions that I haven't put into the story. And what I've just told you about this Hickenlooper bird—he looks like a prize-fighter and talks like a glad-hand circus bally-hooer, and he lies like a politician—was all straight, and she knew it. I've done a little lying myself, but I've never made a three-ring circus of it like him. But Mamie had a sneaking kind of admiration for him, I guess because he's big and strong and a great baby-kisser and girl-jollier.<sup>4</sup> And she let loose on me, and what she said—Whee!

She said I encouraged Robby to smoke. She said I never used an ash-tray—always scattered my ashes around the house—and I'm afraid she had me there. And she said she was sick of having my friends around the house all the time, and I bawled her out for high-hattin' 'em, and she said something about my driving too fast, and I come back with a few short sweet words about back-seat driving—she's the best single-handed non-participating Major Scagrove<sup>5</sup> of the entire inhabited world. And—

And so on.

And that's just typical of a few home Board of Directors conferences we been having, and I'm pretty sick of it.

Not but what I'm just as mean as she is, at that, I suppose.

But I did by God keep old Jackie!

But I'm getting sick of the whole business—

Not, you understand, but what Mamie is just as nice a pal as you'd want to find, in between tantrums. That time we were here and saw you and then went on and had our long talk with Coolidge in Washington,<sup>6</sup> she was jolly the whole time. But more and more— \* \* \*

4. Cf. Lewis' satire of the unworthy clergyman in *Elmer Gantry* (1927).

5. Schmaltz should have said "Segrave." Major H. O. D. Segrave had just won fame (1927) as the first automobile racer to exceed 200 mph., by driving at

203.79 mph. at Daytona Beach, Florida. 6. This was the subject of the first sketch in the volume. President Coolidge was "engaged," and Schmaltz had his "long talk" with a presidential secretary.

Well, Walt, I guess it's getting late and about time for us to turn in—you'll have to be in your office tomorrow, and I think I'll take that 12:18 for home, if I can get a Pullman.

It's been a mighty great privilege to have this frank talk with you. I certainly will take your advice. I'll try to keep from talking and running on so much—you noticed this evening at supper I hardly said a word, but just listened to your good wife. You bet. I've learned my lesson. I'm going to concentrate on selling the goods, and not discuss subjects and topics all the time.

And I hope you'll give my schedule a mighty close once-over and see your way to advance me the loan.

You remember how I've always turned to you. Remember that month I spent with you boys on your granddad's farm when we were 'long about twelve?

God, what fun that was! Regular idyl, you might say, like a fellow can't touch again in these later care-ridden and less poetic years. Remember how we stole those mushmelons from that old farmer, and when he got sassy about it we went back and smashed all the rest of 'em? Remember how we hid the alarm-clock in the church so it went off during the sermon? Remember how we greased the springboard so's that Irish kid slipped on it and almost busted his back? Gosh, I had to laugh!

Oh, those were great days, and you and me always did understand each other, Walt, and don't forget that there's no firm in the world could give you better security for the loan.

1928

## EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

(1892-1950)

Edna St. Vincent Millay's early appearances on the literary scene were all spectacular, and it was some time before the reading public adjusted itself to her kaleidoscopic transformations. In 1912, at the age of twenty, she was the unknown girl of Camden, Maine, whose "Renasceance," a reflective poem of remarkable spiritual penetration and lyric beauty, became celebrated at once because the *Lyric Year* gave its annual

award to an established author, while a number of prominent critics enthusiastically preferred the work of the girl poet. It is still, in fact, one of the favorite poems of its period. In 1917, somewhat revised, it became the title poem of her first volume, comprising poems written while she was a Vassar undergraduate. In 1920 *A Few Figs from Thistles* revealed another transformation. That year, when F. Scott Fitzgerald in *This Side of*

*Paradise* drew the fictional portrait of youth in the jazz age, Edna St. Vincent Millay temporarily became the lyric voice of that rebellious generation. With impudent irreverence she attacked the citadel of conventionalized feminine virtue, in poems that sang gaily of going "back and forth all night on the ferry," or cavalierly accepted a broken love, as in "Passer Mortuus Est," or cynically pretended forgetfulness of "what lips my lips have kissed."

Three years and two volumes of poetry later, *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems* (1923) revealed the poet matured. The daring of *A Few Figs from Thistles* had now become a fine spiritual independence and vitality. The insight and emotional propriety of "Renaissance" had acquired depth; she had thoroughly absorbed her principal literary inheritance, from the Elizabethan and Cavalier lyrics of England; she showed her mastery of the sonnet; and in "The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver" she caught the simplicity of the ballad form.

Born in Rockland, Maine, in 1892, Edna St. Vincent Millay grew up in that city and in nearby Camden. She lacked the financial means to attend college, but a friend of the family offered assistance. She enrolled at Barnard at twenty-one, but soon transferred to Vassar and was graduated in 1917. During her next few years, in Greenwich Village, she was able to support herself by sales of magazine verse and stories, and such satirical sketches as appeared in

*Distressing Dialogues* (1924) under the pseudonym of Nancy Boyd. While living in the Village, she was associated with the Provincetown Players, with whom Eugene O'Neill's first success was won, and she wrote several poetic dramas which have been frequently performed by little-theater groups. One, *The King's Henchman* (1927), was the libretto for a Deems Taylor opera produced in 1927 by the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Following the appearance of *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems*, her major volumes included *The Buck in the Snow and Other Poems* (1928); *Fatal Interview* (1931), a sequence of sonnets recording a love affair, of great psychological interest and lyric excellence; *Wine from These Grapes* (1934); and *Conversation at Midnight* (1937).

With Archibald MacLeish, Stephen Vincent Benét, and many others, she joined those who called upon writers to oppose the growing tyranny manifested in European affairs. The works evoked by these concerns were sincere and journalistically effective, as was *The Murder of Lidice* (1942). Other volumes of this latest period include *Huntsman, What Quarry?* (1939), *Make Bright the Arrows* (1940), and "There Are No Islands, Any More" (1940). During the last decade of her life, Miss Millay published much less frequently in magazines and made no new collections of her poems. She died in 1950.

*Collected Poems*, 1956, was edited by Norma Millay. See also *Collected*

## Justice Denied in Massachusetts · 1363

*Sonnets*, 1941, and *Collected Lyrics*, 1943. A posthumous "collection of new poems," edited by Norma Millay, was entitled *Mine the Harvest*, 1954. The *Letters of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, edited by Allan Ross Macdougall, appeared in 1952.

Biographical studies are Elizabeth Atkins, *Edna St. Vincent Millay and Her Times*, 1936; Vincent Sheean, *The Indigo Bunting: A Memoir of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 1951; and Toby Shafter, *Edna St. Vincent Millay, America's Best-loved Poet*, 1957.

### Passer Mortuus Est<sup>2</sup>

Death devours all lovely things;  
 Lesbia with her sparrow  
 Shares the darkness,—presently  
 Every bed is narrow.

Unremembered as old rain 5  
 Dries the sheer libation,<sup>3</sup>  
 And the little petulant hand  
 Is an annotation.

After all, my erstwhile dear,  
 My no longer cherished, 10  
 Need we say it was not love,  
 Now that love has perished?

1920, 1921

### Justice Denied in Massachusetts<sup>4</sup>

Let us abandon then our gardens and go home  
 And sit in the sitting-room.  
 Shall the larkspur blossom or the corn grow under this cloud?  
 Sour to the fruitful seed  
 Is the cold earth under this cloud, 5  
 Fostering quack and weed, we have marched upon but cannot  
 conquer;  
 We have bent the blades of our hoes against the stalks of them.

Let us go home, and sit in the sitting-room.  
 Not in our day  
 Shall the cloud go over and the sun rise as before, 10  
 Beneficent upon us

2. Latin, "The sparrow is dead." Catullus, in *Carmines*, III, l. 3, uses these words in lamenting the death of a sparrow belonging to his mistress, "Lesbia," whose name Millay introduces in l. 2. The first line of the present poem also echoes Catullus' poem, ll. 13 and 14: "Accursed shades of Orcus [Death], / That devour all lovely things."  
 3. *I.e.*, the wine poured in honor of the dead.

4. Referring to the execution, on August 23, 1927, of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, after nearly seven years of litigation. Many liberals rallied to their defense, claiming that these two "radicals" had not been proved guilty of the payroll robbery and murder for which they were convicted, but were victims of a hysterical conservative reaction. See also Dos Passos.

1364 · *Edna St. Vincent Millay*

Out of the glittering bay,  
 And the warm winds be blown inward from the sea  
 Moving the blades of corn  
 With a peaceful sound. 15  
 Forlorn, forlorn,  
 Stands the blue hay-rack by the empty mow.  
 And the petals drop to the ground,  
 Leaving the tree unfruited.  
 The sun that warmed our stooping backs and withered the weed  
 uprooted— 20  
 We shall not feel it again.  
 We shall die in darkness, and be buried in the rain.  
 What from the splendid dead  
 We have inherited—  
 Furrows sweet to the grain, and the weed subdued— 25  
 See now the slug and the mildew plunder.  
 Evil does overwhelm  
 The larkspur and the corn;  
 We have seen them go under.  
 Let us sit here, sit still, 30  
 Here in the sitting-room until we die;  
 At the step of Death on the walk, rise and go;  
 Leaving to our children's children this beautiful doorway,  
 And this elm,  
 And a blighted earth to till 35  
 With a broken hoe.

6

1928

Oh, Sleep Forever in the Latmian Cave<sup>5</sup>

Oh, sleep forever in the Latmian cave,  
 Mortal Endymion, darling of the Moon!<sup>6</sup>  
 Her silver garments by the senseless wave  
 Shouldered and dropped and on the shingle strewn,  
 Her fluttering hand against her forehead pressed, 5  
 Her scattered looks that trouble all the sky,  
 Her rapid footsteps running down the west—

5. Sonnet LII from *Fatal Interview*.

6. In classic myth the Greek Artemis, or Roman Diana, goddess of the moon, fell in love with Endymion, a mortal youth of surpassing beauty. The goddess was thus drawn down from heaven, wooed the youth, and sacrificed the chastity that was one of her divine at-

tributes. For this impiety, Jupiter doomed Endymion to sleep forever in beauty on Mount Latmos, where the grieving goddess visited him and took care of his flocks. See Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, III: 83; and the poem *Endymion* by John Keats.



Of all her altered state, oblivious lie!  
 Whom earthen you, by deathless lips adored,  
 Wild-eyed and stammering to the grasses thrust, 10  
 And deep into her crystal body poured  
 The hot and sorrowful sweetness of the dust:  
     Whereof she wanders mad, being all unfit  
     For mortal love, that might not die of it.

1931

## EUGENE O'NEILL

(1888-1953)

Eugene O'Neill was foremost among the playwrights who, from 1916 to 1924, brought about in American drama a revolution which fundamentally changed its character. European drama had already been vastly altered by the imaginative energy and inventiveness of such dramatists as Ibsen, Strindberg, Mactertlinck, and Hauptmann. On the British stage, only Shaw had been able to break the well-established conventions of the theater. In the United States, the theater had had a long history, and had produced notable playwrights and some great actors, but it was for that reason the more enmeshed in a proven pattern of successful drama based on the marriage between the Elizabethan tradition and the "well-made" play. Only a decade before O'Neill's works began to appear, the dramas of Clyde Fitch and Augustus Thomas, although excellent of their sort, were only strengthening the rooted conventions.

O'Neill did more than anyone else to destroy these stereotypes, and to substitute an essentially

different dramatic imagination. Fundamentally, his liberation was psychological. He enriched his art by an understanding of the new psychology—not simply Freudianism, but the enlarged awareness of all conscious and subconscious realities. The result was a new depth of seriousness, a new vitality, in the dramas themselves, and the free use, in stagecraft and acting, of experimental techniques which completely ignored the "well-made" conventions, and called directly upon the subconscious responses of the audience.

His work was remarkably free from direct influences, and his imagination was so opulent that in all his many dramas he never echoed even himself. He was a master of the organic form; each play grew from the inner nature of its own conflict and psychology, and almost every one is basically different from the others. It is very difficult to name the "typical" O'Neill play. The three characteristics almost universally present, however, are all powerfully illustrated in *The Hairy Ape*. O'Neill perhaps reflects his acquaintance with the

dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg in his preference for expressionism, a device first developed by nineteenth-century painting. In order to "express" the inner significance of his work, to convey it to the imagination as well as the intellect of the beholder, the artist may stylize or distort the representation of literal reality, as O'Neill does when he indicates in his stage directions that the ceiling of the firemen's forecabin is to be so low that it "crushes down upon the men's heads." The play also illustrates O'Neill's adoption of the language of poetic symbolism, which had become associated with the new European drama from Ibsen to Maeterlinck. As O'Neill has pointed out, he is "a bit of a poet," although his plays are not written in verse; he recognizes that the imagination and emotion of high drama are more nearly those of poetry than those of prose. Finally, he cherishes a faith in the dignity of man, which he announced early in his career. In this he is most strikingly different from Strindberg and Hauptmann, with their naturalistic view that man's destiny is determined by forces quite beyond his control. O'Neill proclaimed as his object the representation of "man's self-destructive struggle to be expressed in the Life-Force" and not to become, like another animal, "a mere incident in its expression."

The playwright was born in a Broadway hotel on October 16, 1888, and was christened Eugene Gladstone O'Neill. He was an infant and juvenile troupier

with his father, an eminent romantic actor, and was educated by tutors and in private schools. His attendance at Princeton (1906-7) terminated in an undergraduate prank. He shipped aboard a Norwegian freighter to Buenos Aires; he loitered in Latin ports, with the sailors, stevedores, waifs, who became his *dramatis personae*, along with characters encountered in offices where he worked, or on a gold-seeking expedition in Honduras. Back home, he briefly served his father as advance agent and box-office man. He had success as a reporter for the New London *Telegraph*. Recuperating from tuberculosis in 1912 he read the classic repertoire of the theater; he spent the winter of 1914 at Harvard, in George Baker's famous dramatic workshop. The next year he was a member of the Provincetown Players on Cape Cod with other fledglings named Susan Glaspell, "Jig" Cook, Robert Edmond Jones, Mielziner and Macgowan—all soon to follow their bright stars to Greenwich Village and Broadway. Writing for this group, O'Neill won success with such one-act plays as the S.S. *Glencairn* group and other plays combining realism with experimental forms. He also acquired a reading audience, when a number of them were published by Mencken and Nathan in their magazine, *The Smart Set*, during 1917-1918. In 1920, O'Neill's first long play to be produced, *Beyond the Horizon*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Within the next two years, the production of such powerful plays as *The Emperor Jones*,

*Anna Christie*, and *The Hairy Ape* left no doubt that a dramatist of great power had appeared. Before long these and later plays of O'Neill were being performed in the capitals of Europe, and he became an international influence.

Between 1924 and 1931, O'Neill produced nine plays, most of them tragedies with complex psychological implications. *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *The Great God Brown* (1926), and *Strange Interlude* (1928) were challenging in their thematic use of miscegenation, incest, passionate crime, and polyandrous relationships. *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), the climax and triumph of his career, exploited the Greek tragedies of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, Orestes and Electra in an Aeschylean trilogy dealing with a New England family of the Civil War period. *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933) was a brilliant domestic comedy, his only venture in this field.

O'Neill was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1936, two years after he was stricken with a fatal malady. During intervals of improved health he completed four full-length plays and the scenario for a cycle of eleven plays dramatizing several successive generations of a family. Two plays of the cycle were completed; he destroyed the remaining manuscripts before his death in 1953.

In the shadow of the World War he temporarily shelved the cycle for work on three plays which, as he said, he knew he could finish. *The Iceman Cometh* was completed in 1939 but

not produced and published until 1946. The three plays were all motivated by the dominant theme of the first, a dramatic allegory of common man withstanding the fears and futility of this age by clinging irrationally to hope or to those illusions which transmit a visionary light. This is also the theme of *Hughie*, the only survivor of eight one-acters drafted in 1940. *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1952), written in 1943, is an intensely autobiographical exploration of the spiritual disorders of an American family, possibly his own. Powerful but difficult, it did not fare so well with audiences but deserves to be studied. In 1941 he had written the play on his family which proved to be a masterpiece. *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956) is an overwhelming tragedy based on the playwright's impression of the drama of love, madness, and death played out between his frail parents. He had postponed writing it, he said, until I could "face my dead \* \* \* with pity, understanding, and forgiveness." Magnificently produced and performed in Stockholm in 1955 and in New York in 1956-57, it won the first Pulitzer Prize ever awarded posthumously, and was the fourth of his plays to win that award. To the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Stockholm, which had produced his earlier plays with noteworthy insight, O'Neill gave first production rights to his other posthumous plays. *A Touch of the Poet* (1957) was successful there in 1956 and in New York in 1958. This is one of the two plays of the family cycle which O'Neill

preserved; *More Stately Mansions* is extant in a manuscript not fully revised, under study for possible production by the Stockholm company, which in 1958 performed *Hughie* (1959).

Complete to its date of publication is *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill*, 12 vols., 1934–1935. The following collections are also available: *The Complete Works* \* \* \*, 2 vols., 1925; *Collected*

*Plays* \* \* \*, 4 vols., 1933; *Nine Plays*, 1932; and *Lost Plays* \* \* \*, 1950, 1958, ed. L. Gellert.

Biographical and critical studies include B. H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays*, 1947; A. Boulton, *Part of A Long Story*, 1958; C. Bowen and S. O'Neill, *Curse of the Misbegotten*, 1959; R. D. Skinner, *Eugene O'Neill: A Poet's Quest*, 1935; S. K. Winther, *Eugene O'Neill, A Critical Study*, 1934; E. A. Engel, *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill*, 1953; and D. V. Falk, *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension*, 1958.

## The Hairy Ape<sup>1</sup>

### Characters

Robert Smith, "Yank"

Paddy

Long

Mildred Douglas

Her Aunt

Second Engineer

A Guard

A Secretary of an Organization

Stokers, Ladies, Gentlemen, etc.

### Scenes

Scene I: The firemen's forecandle of an ocean liner—an hour after sailing from New York.

Scene II: Section of promenade deck, two days out—morning.

Scene III: The stokehole. A few minutes later.

Scene IV: Same as Scene I. Half an hour later.

Scene V: Fifth Avenue, New York. Three weeks later.

Scene VI: An island near the city. The next night.

Scene VII: In the city. About a month later.

Scene VIII: In the city. Twilight of the next day.

### Scene I

SCENE. The firemen's forecandle of a transatlantic liner an hour after sailing from New York for the voyage across. Tiers of narrow, steel bunks, three deep, on all sides. An entrance in rear. Benches on the floor before the bunks. The room is crowded with men, shouting, cursing, laughing, singing—a confused, inchoate uproar swelling into a sort of unity, a meaning—the bewildered, furious, baffled

1. First produced on March 9, 1922, by the Provincetown Players at the Playwrights' Theatre on Macdougall Street in New York's Greenwich Village. With Louis Wolheim as Yank, *The Hairy Ape* succeeded at once, and within a

few years had been produced all over the world. It has been revived repeatedly, particularly in little theaters. For general comment on the play, see the early paragraphs of the introduction.

defiance of a beast in a cage. Nearly all the men are drunk. Many bottles are passed from hand to hand. All are dressed in dungaree pants, heavy ugly shoes. Some wear singlets, but the majority are stripped to the waist.

The treatment of this scene, or of any other scene in the play, should by no means be naturalistic. The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel. The lines of bunks, the uprights supporting them, cross each other like the steel framework of a cage. The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. They cannot stand upright. This accentuates the natural stooping posture which shoveling coal and the resultant overdevelopment of back and shoulder muscles have given them. The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes. All the civilized white races are represented, but except for the slight differentiation in color of hair, skin, eyes, all these men are alike.

The curtain rises on a tumult of sound. YANK is seated in the foreground. He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength—the grudging respect of fear. Then, too, he represents to them a self-expression, the very last word in what they are, their most highly developed individual.

VOICES. Gif me trink dere, you!

'Ave a wet!

Salute!

Gesundheit!

Skoal!

Drunk as a lord, God stiffen you!

Here's how!

Luck!

Pass back that bottle, damn you!

Pourin' it down his neck!

Ho, Froggy! Where the devil have you been?

*La Touraine.*

I hit him smash in yaw, py Gott!

Jenkins—the first—he's a rotten swine——

And the coppers nabbed him—and I run——

I like peer better. It don't pig head gif you.

A slut, I'm sayin'! She robbed me aslape——

To hell with 'em all!

You're a bloody liar!

Say dot again!

[*Commotion. Two men about to fight are pulled apart.*]

No scrappin' now!

To-night——

See who's the best man!

Bloody Dutchman!

To-night on the for'ard square.

I'll bet on Dutchy.

He packa da wallop, I tella you!

Shut up, Wop!

No fightin', matics. We're all chums, ain't we?

[*A voice starts bawling a song.*]

"Beer, beer, glorious beer!

I'll yourselves right up to here."

YANK. [*For the first time seeming to take notice of the uproar about him, turns around threateningly—in a tone of contemptuous authority.*] Choke off dat noise! Where d'you get dat beer stuff? Beer, hell! Beer's for goils—and Dutchmen. Me for somep'n wit a kick to it! Gimme a drink, one of youse guys. [*Several bottles are eagerly offered. He takes a tremendous gulp at one of them; then, keeping the bottle in his hand, glares belligerently at the owner, who hastens to acquiesce in this robbery by saying.*] All righto, Yank. Keep it and have another. [*YANK contemptuously turns his back on the crowd again. For a second there is an embarrassed silence* Then——]

VOICES. We must be passing the Hook.<sup>2</sup>

She's beginning to roll to it.

Six days in hell—and then Southampton.

Py Yesus, I vish somepody take my first vatch for me!

Gittin' seasick, Square-head?

Drink up and forget it!

What's in your bottle?

Gin.

Dot's nigger trink.

Absinthe? It's doped. You'll go off your chump, Froggy!

Cochon!

Whisky, that's the ticket!

Where's Paddy?

Going asleep.

Sing us that whisky song, Paddy.

[*They all turn to an old, wizened Irishman who is dozing, very drunk, on the benches forward. His face is extremely monkey-like with all the sad, patient pathos of that animal in his small eyes.*]

Singa da song, Caruso Pat!

He's gettin' old. The drink is too much for him.

2. Sandy Hook, New York Harbor, gateway to the open sea.

He's too drunk.

PADDY. [*Blinking about him, starts to his feet resentfully, swaying, holding on to the edge of a bunk.*] I'm never too drunk to sing. 'Tis only when I'm dead to the world I'd be wishful to sing at all. [*With a sort of sad contempt.*] "Whisky Johnny," ye want? A chanty, ye want? Now that's a queer wish from the ugly like of you, God help you. But no matther. [*He starts to sing in a thin, nasal, doleful tone.*]

Oh, whisky is the life of man!

Whisky! O Johnny! [*They all join in on this.*]

Oh, whisky is the life of man!

Whisky for my Johnny! [*Again chorus.*]

Oh, whisky drove my old man mad!

Whisky! O Johnny!

Oh, whisky drove my old man mad!

Whisky for my Johnny!

YANK. [*Again turning around scornfully.*] Aw hell! Nix on dat old sailing ship stuff! All dat bull's dead, sec? And you're dead, too, yuh damned old Harp, on'y yuh don't know it. Take it easy, sec. Give us a rest. Nix on de loud noise. [*With a cynical grin.*] Can't youse see I'm tryin' to t'ink?

ALL. [*Repeating the word after him as one with the same cynical amused mockery.*] Think! [*The chorused word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a general uproar of hard, barking laughter.*]

VOICES. Don't be cracking your head wit ut, Yank.

You gat headache, py yingo!

One thing about it—it rhymes with drink!

Ha, ha, ha!

Drink, don't think!

Drink, don't think!

Drink, don't think!

[*A whole chorus of voices has taken up this refrain, stamping on the floor, pounding on the benches with fists.*]

YANK. [*Taking a gulp from his bottle—goodnaturedly.*] Aw right. Can de noise. I got yuh de foist time.

[*The uproar subsides. A very drunken sentimental tenor begins to sing.*]

"Far away in Canada,

Far across the sea,

There's a lass who fondly waits

Making a home for me——"

YANK [*Fiercely contemptuous.*] Shut up, yuh lousy boob! Where d'yuh get dat tripe? Home? Home, hell! I'll make a home for yuh! I'll knock yuh dead. Home! T'hell wit home! Where d'yuh get dat

tripe? Dis is home, see? What d'yuh want wit home? [*Proudly.*] I runned away from mine when I was a kid. On'y too glad to beat it, dat was me. Home was lickings for me, dat's all. But yuh can bet your shoit no one ain't never licked me since! Wanter try it, any of youse? Huh! I guess not. [*In a more placated but still contemptuous tone.*] Goils waitin' for yuh, huh? Aw, hell! Dat's all tripe. Dey don't wait for no onc. Dey'd double-cross yuh for a nickel. Dey're all tarts, get me? Treat 'em rough, dat's mc. To hell wit 'em. Tarts, dat's what, de whole bunch of 'em.

LONG. [*Very drunk, jumps on a bench excitedly, gesticulating with a bottle in his hand.*] Listen 'ere, Comrades! Yank 'ere is right. 'E says this 'ere stinkin' ship is our 'ome. And 'e says as 'ome is 'ell. And 'e's right! 'This is 'ell. We lives in 'ell, Comrades—and right enough we'll die in it. [*Raging.*] And who's ter blame, I arks yer? We ain't. We wasn't born this rotten way. All men is born free and ekal. That's in the bleedin' Bible, maties. But what d'they care for the Bible—them lazy, bloated swine what travels first cabin? Them's the ones. They dragged us down 'til we're on'y wage slaves in the bowels of a bloody ship, sweatin', burnin' up, catin' coal dust! Hit's them's ter blame—the damned Capitalist class!

[*There had been a gradual murmur of contemptuous resentment rising among the men until now he is interrupted by a storm of catcalls, hisses, boos, hard laughter.*]

VOICES. Turn it off!

Shut up!

Sit down!

Closa da face!

Tamn fool! [*Etc.*]

YANK. [*Standing up and glaring at LONG.*] Sit down before I knock yuh down! [*LONG makes haste to efface himself. YANK goes on contemptuously.*] De Bible, huh? De Cap'tlist class, huh? Aw nix on dat Salvation Army-Socialist bull. Git a soapbox! Hire a hall! Come and be saved, huh? Jerk us to Jesus, huh? Aw g'wan! I've listened to lots of guys like you, see. Yuh're all wrong. Wanter know what I t'ink? Yuh ain't no good for no one. Yuh're de bunk. Yuh ain't got no noive, get me? Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Yellow, dat's you. Say! What's dem slob in de foist cabin got to do wit us? We're better men dan dey are, ain't we? Sure! One of us guys could clean up de whole mob wit one mit. Put one of 'em down here for one watch in de stokehole, what'd happen? Dey'd carry him off on a stretcher. Dem boids don't amount to nothin'. Dey're just baggage. Who makes dis old tub run? Ain't it us guys? Well den, we belong, don't we? We belong and dey don't. Dat's all [*A loud chorus of approval. YANK goes on.*] As for dis bein' hell—aw, nuts! Yuh lost your noive, dat's what. Dis is a man's job, get me? It be-



longs. It runs dis tub. No stiffs need apply. But yuh're a stiff, see? Yuh're yellow, dat's you.

VOICES. [*With a great hard pride in them.*]

Righto!

A man's job!

Talk is cheap, Long.

He never could hold up his end.

Divil take him!

Yank's right. We make it go.

Py Gott, Yank say right ting!

We don't need no one cryin' over us.

Makin' speeces.

'Throw him out!

Yellow!

Chuck him overboard!

I'll break his jaw for him!

[*They crowd around LONG threateningly.*]

YANK. [*Half good-natured again—contemptuously.*] Aw, take it easy. Leave him alone. He ain't woith a punch. Drink up. Here's how, whoever owns dis. [*He takes a long swallow from his bottle. All drink with him. In a flash all is hilarious amiability again, back-slapping, loud talk, etc.*]

PADDY. [*Who has been sitting in a blinking, melancholy daze—suddenly cries out in a voice full of old sorrow.*] We belong to this, you're saying? We make the ship to go, you're saying? Yerra<sup>3</sup> then, that Almighty God have pity on us! [*His voice runs into the wail of a keen,<sup>4</sup> he rocks back and forth on his bench. The men stare at him, startled and impressed in spite of themselves.*] Oh, to be back in the fine days of my youth, ochone!<sup>5</sup> Oh, there was fine beautiful ships them days—clippers wid tall masts touching the sky—fine strong men in them—men that was sons of the sea as if 'twas the mother that bore them. Oh, the clean skins of them, and the clear eyes, the straight backs and full chests of them! Brave men they was, and bold men surely! We'd be sailing out, bound down round the Horn maybe. We'd be making sail in the dawn, with a fair breeze, singing a chanty song wid no care to it. And astern the land would be sinking low and dying out, but we'd give it no heed but a laugh, and never a look behind. For the day that was, was enough, for we was free men—and I'm thinking 'tis only slaves do be giving heed to the day that's gone or the day to come—until they're old like me. [*With a sort of religious exaltation.*] Oh, to be scudding south again wid the power of the Trade Wind driving her on steady through the nights and the days! Full sail on her! Nights and days!

3. An Irish exclamation, loosely equivalent to "verily," "truly."

4. An Irish lamentation, as for the dead.

5. Irish, "alas."

Nights when the foam of the wake would be flaming wid fire, when the sky'd be blazing and winking wid stars. Or the full of the moon maybe. Then you'd see her driving through the gray night, her sails stretching aloft all silver and white, not a sound on the deck, the lot of us dreaming dreams, till you'd believe 'twas no real ship at all you was on but a ghost ship like the *Flying Dutchman* they say does be roaming the seas forevermore without touching a port. And there was the days, too. A warm sun on the clean decks. Sun warming the blood of you, and wind over the miles of shiny green ocean like strong drink to your lungs. Work—aye, hard work—but who'd mind that at all? Sure, you worked under the sky and 'twas work wid skill and daring to it. And wid the day done, in the dog watch, smoking me pipe at ease, the lookout would be raising land maybe, and we'd see the mountains of South Americy wid the red fire of the setting sun painting their white tops and the clouds floating by them! [*His tone of exaltation ceases. He goes on mournfully.*] Yerra, what's the use of talking? 'Tis a dead man's whisper. [*To YANK resentfully.*] 'Twas them days men belonged to ships, not now. 'Twas them days a ship was part of the sea, and a man was part of a ship, and the sea joined all together and made it one. [*Scornfully.*] Is it one wid this you'd be, Yank—black smoke from the funnels smudging the sea, smudging the decks—the bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking—wid divil a sight of sun or a breath of clean air—choking our lungs wid coal dust—breaking our backs and hearts in the hell of the stokehole—feeding the bloody furnace—feeding our lives along wid the coal, I'm thinking—caged in by steel from a sight of the sky like bloody apes in the Zoo! [*With a harsh laugh.*] Ho-ho, divil mend you! Is it to belong to that you're wishing? Is it a flesh and blood wheel of the engines you'd be?

YANK. [*Who has been listening with a contemptuous sneer, barks out the answer.*] Sure ting! Dat's me. What about it?

PADDY. [*As if to himself—with great sorrow.*] Me time is past due. That a great wave wid sun in the heart of it may sweep me over the side sometime I'd be dreaming of the days that's gone!

YANK. Aw, yuh crazy Mick! [*He springs to his feet and advances on PADDY threateningly—then stops, fighting some queer struggle within himself—lets his hands fall to his sides—contemptuously.*] Aw, take it easy. Yuh're aw right at dat. Yuh're bugs, dat's all—nutty as a cuckoo. All dat tripe yuh been pullin'—Aw, dat's all right. On'y it's dead, get me? Yuh don't belong no more, see. Yuh don't get de stuff. Yuh're too old. [*Disgustedly.*] But aw say, come up for air onct in a while, can't yuh? See what's happened since yuh croaked. [*He suddenly bursts forth vehemently, growing more and more excited.*] Say! Sure! Sure I meant it! What de hell— Say, lemme talk! Hey! Hey, you old Harp! Hey, youse guys! Say, listen to

me—wait a moment—I gotter talk, see. I belong and he don't. He's dead but I'm livin'. Listen to me! Sure, I'm part of de engines! Why de hell not! Dey move, don't dey? Dey're speed, ain't dey! Dey smash trou, don't dey? Twenty-five knots a hour! Dat's goin' some! Dat's new stuff! Dat belongs! But him, he's too old. He gets dizzy. Say, listen. All dat crazy tripe about nights and days; all dat crazy tripe about stars and moons; all dat crazy tripe about suns and winds, fresh air and de rest of it— Aw hell, dat's all a dope dream! Hittin' de pipe of de past, dat's what he's doin'. He's old and don't belong no more. But me, I'm young! I'm in de pink! I move wit it! It, get me! I mean de ting dat's de guts of all dis. It ploughs trou all de tripe he's been sayin'. It blows dat up! It knocks dat dead! It slams dat offen de face of de oith! It, get me! De engines and de coal and de smoke and all de rest of it! He can't breathe and swallow coal dust, but I kin, see? Dat's fresh air for me! Dat's food for me! I'm new, get me? Hell in de stokehole? Sure! It takes a man to work in hell. Hell, sure, dat's my fav'rite climate. I eat it up! I git fat on it! It's me makes it hot! It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move! Sure, on'y for me everyting stops. It all goes dead, get me? De noise and smoke and all de engines movin' de woild, dey stop. Dere ain't nothin' no more! Dat's what I'm sayin'. Everyting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move. It can't move witout somep'n else, sec? Den yuh get down to me. I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves! It—dat's me! —de new dat's moiderin' de old! I'm de ting in coal dat makes it boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines; I'm de ting in noise dat makes yuh hear it; I'm smoke and express trains and steamers and factory whistles; I'm de ting in gold dat makes it money! And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting! And I'm steel—steel—steel! I'm de muscles in steel, de punch behind it! [As he says this he pounds with his fist against the steel bunks. All the men, roused to a pitch of frenzied self-glorification by his speech, do likewise. There is a deafening metallic roar, through which YANK's voice can be heard bellowing.] Slaves, hell! We run de whole woiks. All de rich guys dat tink dey're somep'n, dey ain't nothin'! Dey don't belong. But us guys, we're in de move, we're at de bottom, de whole ting is us! [PADDY from the start of YANK's speech has been taking one gulp after another from his bottle, at first frightenedly, as if he were afraid to listen, then desperately, as if to drown his senses, but finally has achieved complete indifferent, even amused, drunkenness. YANK sees his lips moving. He quells the up-roar with a shout.] Hcy, youse guys, take it easy! Wait a moment! De nutty Harp is sayin' somep'n.

PADDY. [Is heard now—throws his head back with a mocking

*burst of laughter.*] Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho——

YANK. [*Drawing back his fist, with a snarl.*] Aw! Look out who yuh're givin' the bark!

PADDY. [*Begins to sing the "Miller of Dee" with enormous good nature.*]

"I care for nobody, no, not I,  
And nobody cares for me."

YANK. [*Good-natured himself in a flash, interrupts PADDY with a slap on the bare back like a report.*] Dat's de stuff! Now yuh're gettin' wise to somec'n. Care for nobody, dat's de dope! To hell wit 'em all! And nix on nobody else carin'. I kin care for myself, get me! [*Eight bells sound, muffled, vibrating through the steel walls as if some enormous brazen gong were imbedded in the heart of the ship. All the men jump up mechanically, file through the door silently close upon each other's heels in what is very like a prisoners' lockstep. YANK slaps PADDY on the back.*] Our watch, yuh old Harp! [*Mockingly.*] Come on down in hell. Eat up de coal dust. Drink in de heat. It's it, see! Act like yuh liked it, yuh better—or croak yuhself.

PADDY. [*With jovial defiance.*] To the devil wid it! I'll not report this watch. Let thim log me and be damned. I'm no slave the like of you. I'll be sittin' here at me ease, and drinking, and thinking, and dreaming dreams.

YANK. [*Contemptuously.*] Tinkin' and dreamin', what'll that get yuh? What's tinkin' got to do wit it? We move, don't we? Speed, ain't it? Fog, dat's all you stand for. But we drive trou dat, don't we? We split dat up and smash trou—twenty-five knots a hour! [*Turns his back on PADDY scornfully.*] Aw, yuh make me sick! Yuh don't belong! [*He strides out the door in rear. PADDY hums to himself, blinking drowsily.*]

[*Curtain.*]

## Scene II

SCENE. Two days out. A section of the promenade deck. MILDRED DOUGLAS and her AUNT are discovered reclining in deck chairs. The former is a girl of twenty, slender, delicate, with a pale, pretty face marred by a self-conscious expression of disdainful superiority. She looks fretful, nervous, and discontented, bored by her own anemia. Her aunt is a pompous and proud—and fat—old lady. She is a type even to the point of a double chin and lorgnette. She is dressed pretentiously, as if afraid her face alone would never indicate her position in life. MILDRED is dressed all in white.

The impression to be conveyed by this scene is one of the beautiful, vivid life of the sea all about—sunshine on the deck in a great flood, the fresh sea wind blowing across it. In the midst of this,

these two incongruous, artificial figures, inert and disharmonious, the elder like a gray lump of dough touched up with rouge, the younger looking as if the vitality of her stock had been sapped before she was conceived, so that she is the expression not of its life energy but merely of the artificialities that energy had won for itself in the spending.

MILDRED. [*Looking up with affected dreaminess.*] How the black smoke swirls back against the sky! Is it not beautiful?

AUNT. [*Without looking up.*] I dislike smoke of any kind.

MILDRED. My great-grandmother smoked a pipe—a clay pipe.

AUNT. [*Ruffling.*] Vulgar.

MILDRED. She was too distant a relative to be vulgar. Time mel-  
lows pipes.

AUNT. [*Pretending boredom but irritated.*] Did the sociology you took up at college teach you that—to play the ghoul on every possible occasion, excavating old bones? Why not let your great-grandmother rest in her grave?

MILDRED. [*Dreamily.*] With her pipe beside her—puffing in Paradise.

AUNT. [*With spite.*] Yes, you are a natural born ghoul. You are even getting to look like one, my dear.

MILDRED. [*In a passionless tone.*] I detest you, Aunt. [*Looking at her critically.*] Do you know what you remind me of? Of a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum tablecloth in the kitchen of a—but the possibilities are wearisome. [*She closes her eyes.*]

AUNT. [*With a bitter laugh.*] Merci for your candor. But since I am and must be your chaperon—in appearance, at least—let us patch up some sort of armed truce. For my part you are quite free to indulge any pose of eccentricity that beguiles you—as long as you observe the amenities——

MILDRED. [*Drawling.*] The inanities?

AUNT. [*Going on as if she hadn't heard.*] After exhausting the morbid thrills of social service work on New York's East Side—how they must have hated you, by the way, the poor that you made so much poorer in their own eyes!—you are now bent on making your slumming international. Well, I hope Whitechapel<sup>6</sup> will provide the needed nerve tonic. Do not ask me to chaperon you there, however. I told your father I would not. I loathe deformity. We will hire an army of detectives and you may investigate everything—they allow you to see.

MILDRED. [*Protesting with a trace of genuine earnestness.*] Please

6. An underprivileged district of London, compared here with the East Side in New York.

do not mock at my attempts to discover how the other half lives. Give me credit for some sort of groping sincerity in that at least. I would like to help them. I would like to be some use in the world. Is it my fault I don't know how? I would like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere. [*With weary bitterness.*] But I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor integrity. All that was burnt out in our stock before I was born. Grandfather's blast furnaces, flaming to the sky, melting steel, making millions—then father keeping those home fires burning, making more millions—and little me at the tail-end of it all. I'm a waste product in the Bessemer process—like the millions. Or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the by-product, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it. I am sired by gold and damned by it, as they say at the race track—damned in more ways than one. [*She laughs mirthlessly.*]

AUNT. [*Unimpressed—superciliously.*] You seem to be going in for sincerity to-day. It isn't becoming to you, really—except as an obvious pose. Be as artificial as you are, I advise. There's a sort of sincerity in that, you know. And, after all, you must confess you like that better.

MILDRED. [*Again affected and bored.*] Yes, I suppose I do. Pardon me for my outburst. When a leopard complains of its spots, it must sound rather grotesque. [*In a mocking tone.*] Purr, little leopard, Purr, scratch, tear, kill, gorge yourself and be happy—only stay in the jungle where your spots are camouflage. In a cage they make you conspicuous.

AUNT. I don't know what you are talking about.

MILDRED. It would be rude to talk about anything to you. Let's just talk. [*She looks at her wrist watch.*] Well, thank goodness, it's about time for them to come for me. That ought to give me a new thrill, Aunt.

AUNT. [*Affectedly troubled.*] You don't mean to say you're really going? The dirt—the heat must be frightful—

MILDRED. Grandfather started as a puddler. I should have inherited an immunity to heat that would make a salamander shiver. It will be fun to put it to the test.

AUNT. But don't you have to have the captain's—or someone's—permission to visit the stokehole?

MILDRED. [*With a triumphant smile.*] I have it—both his and the chief engineer's. Oh, they didn't want to at first, in spite of my social service credentials. They didn't seem a bit anxious that I should investigate how the other half lives and works on a ship. So I had to tell them that my father, the president of Nazareth Steel, chairman of the board of directors of this line, had told me it would be all right.

AUNT. He didn't.

MILDRED. How naïve age makes one! But I said he did, Aunt. I even said he had given me a letter to them—which I had lost. And they were afraid to take the chance that I might be lying. [*Excitedly.*] So it's ho! for the stokehole. The second engineer is to escort me. [*Looking at her watch again.*] It's time. And here he comes, I think.

[*The SECOND ENGINEER enters. He is a husky, fine-looking man of thirty-five or so. He stops before the two and tips his cap, visibly embarrassed and ill-at-ease.*]

SECOND ENGINEER. Miss Douglas?

MILDRED. Yes. [*Throwing off her rugs and getting to her feet.*] Are we all ready to start?

SECOND ENGINEER. In just a second, ma'am. I'm waiting for the Fourth. He's coming along.

MILDRED. [*With a scornful smile.*] You don't care to shoulder this responsibility alone, is that it?

SECOND ENGINEER. [*Forcing a smile.*] Two are better than one. [*Disturbed by her eyes, glances out to sea—blurts out.*] A fine day we're having.

MILDRED. Is it?

SECOND ENGINEER. A nice warm breeze——

MILDRED. It feels cold to me.

SECOND ENGINEER. But it's hot enough in the sun——

MILDRED. Not hot enough for me. I don't like Nature. I was never athletic.

SECOND ENGINEER. [*Forcing a smile.*] Well, you'll find it hot enough where you're going.

MILDRED. Do you mean hell?

SECOND ENGINEER. [*Flabbergasted, decides to laugh.*] Ho-ho! No, I mean the stokehole.

MILDRED. My grandfather was a puddler. He played with boiling steel.

SECOND ENGINEER. [*All at sea—uneasily.*] Is that so? Hum, you'll excuse me, ma'am, but are you intending to wear that dress?

MILDRED. Why not?

SECOND ENGINEER. You'll likely rub against oil and dirt. It can't be helped.

MILDRED. It doesn't matter. I have lots of white dresses.

SECOND ENGINEER. I have an old coat you might throw over——

MILDRED. I have fifty dresses like this. I will throw this one into the sea when I come back. That ought to wash it clean, don't you think?

SECOND ENGINEER. [*Doggedly.*] There's ladders to climb down that are none too clean—and dark alleyways——

MILDRED. I will wear this very dress and none other.

SECOND ENGINEER. No offense meant. It's none of my business. I was only warning you——

MILDRED. Warning? That sounds thrilling.

SECOND ENGINEER. [*Looking down the deck—with a sigh of relief.*] There's the Fourth now. He's waiting for us. If you'll come——

MILDRED. Go on. I'll follow you. [*He goes. MILDRED turns a mocking smile on her aunt.*] An oaf—but a handsome, virile oaf.

AUNT. [*Scornfully.*] Poser!

MILDRED. Take care. He said there were dark alleyways——

AUNT. [*In the same tone.*] Poser!

MILDRED. [*Biting her lips angrily.*] You are right. But would that my millions were not so anemically chaste!

AUNT. Yes, for a fresh pose I have no doubt you would drag the name of Douglas in the gutter!

MILDRED. From which it sprang. Goodby, Aunt. Don't pray too hard that I may fall into the fiery furnace.

AUNT. Poser!

MILDRED. [*Viciously.*] Old hag! [*She slaps her aunt insultingly across the face and walks off, laughing gayly.*]

AUNT. [*Screams after her.*] I said poser!

[*Curtain.*]

### Scene III

SCENE. The stokehole. In the rear, the dimly-outlined bulks of the furnaces and boilers. High overhead one hanging electric bulb sheds just enough light through the murky air laden with coal dust to pile up masses of shadows everywhere. A line of men, stripped to the waist, is before the furnace doors. They bend over, looking neither to right nor left, handling their shovels as if they were part of their bodies, with a strange, awkward, swinging rhythm. They use the shovels to throw open the furnace doors. Then from these fiery round holes in the black a flood of terrific light and heat pours full upon the men who are outlined in silhouette in the crouching, inhuman attitudes of chained gorillas. The men shovel with a rhythmic motion, swinging as on a pivot from the coal which lies in heaps on the floor behind to hurl it into the flaming mouths before them. There is a tumult of noise—the brazen clang of the furnace doors as they are flung open or slammed shut, the grating, teeth-gritting grind of steel against steel, of crunching coal. This clash of sounds stuns one's ears with its rending dissonance. But there is order in it, rhythm, a mechanical regulated recurrence, a tempo. And rising above all, making the air hum with the quiver of liberated energy, the roar of leaping flames in the furnaces, the



monotonous throbbing beat of the engines.

As the curtain rises, the furnace doors are shut. The men are taking a breathing spell. One or two are arranging the coal behind them, pulling it into more accessible heaps. The others can be dimly made out leaning on their shovels in relaxed attitudes of exhaustion.

PADDY. [*From somewhere in the line—plaintively.*] Yerra, will this devil's own watch nivir end? Mc back is broke. I'm destroyed entirely.

YANK. [*From the center of the line—with exuberant scorn.*] Aw, yuh make me sick! Lie down and croak, why don't yuh? Always beefin', dat's you! Say, dis is a cinch! Dis was made for me! It's my meat, get me! [*A whistle is blown—a thin, shrill note from somewhere overhead in the darkness. YANK curses without resentment.*] Dere's de damn engineer crackin' de whip. He tinks we're loafin'.

PADDY. [*Vindictively.*] God stiffen him!

YANK. [*In an exultant tone of command.*] Come on, youse guys! Git into de game! Shc's gittin hungry! Pile some grub in her. 'Trow it into her belly! Come on now, all of youse! Open her up!

[*At this last all the men, who have followed his movements of getting into position, throw open their furnace doors with a deafening clang. The fiery light floods over their shoulders as they bend round for the coal. Rivulets of sooty sweat have traced maps on their backs. The enlarged muscles form bunches of high light and shadow.*]

YANK. [*Chanting a count as he shovels without seeming effort.*] One—two—tree—— [*His voice rising exultantly in the joy of battle.*] Dat's de stuff! Let her have it! All togedder now! Sling it into her! Let her ride! Shoot de piece now! Call de toin on her! Drive her into it! Feel her move! Watch her smoke! Speed, dat's her middle name! Give her coal, youse guys! Coal, dat's her booze! Drink it up, baby! Let's see yuh sprint! Dig in and gain a lap! Dere she go-o-es. [*This last in the chanting formula of the gallery gods at the six-day bike race. He slams his furnace door shut. The others do likewise with as much unison as their wearied bodies will permit. The effect is of one fiery eye after another being blotted out with a series of accompanying bangs.*]

PADDY. [*Groaning.*] Mc back is broke. I'm bate out—bate—— [*There is a pause. Then the inexorable whistle sounds again from the dim regions above the electric light. There is a growl of cursing rage from all sides.*]

YANK. [*Shaking his fist upward—contemptuously.*] Take it easy dere, you! Who d'yuh tinks runnin' dis game, me or you? When I git ready, we move. Not before! When I git ready, get me!

VOICES. [*Approvingly.*] That's the stuff!

Yank tal him, py golly!

Yank ain't afeerd.

Goot poy, Yank!

Give him hell!

Tell 'im 'c's a bloody swine!

Bloody slave-driver!

YANK. [*Contemptuously.*] He ain't got no noive. He's yellow, get me? All de engineers is yellow. Dey got streaks a mile wide. Aw, to hell wit him! Let's move, youse guys. We had a rest. Come on, she needs it! Give her pep! It ain't for him. Him and his whistle, dey don't belong. But we belong, see! We gotter feed de baby! Come on! [*He turns and flings his furnace door open. They all follow his lead. At this instant the SECOND and FOURTH ENGINEERS enter from the darkness on the left with MILDRED between them. She starts, turns paler, her pose is crumbling, she shivers with fright in spite of the blazing heat, but forces herself to leave the ENGINEERS and take a few steps nearer the men. She is right behind YANK. All this happens quickly while the men have their backs turned.*]

YANK. Come on, youse guys! [*He is turning to get coal when the whistle sounds again in a peremptory, irritating note. This drives YANK into a sudden fury. While the other men have turned full around and stopped dumfounded by the spectacle of MILDRED standing there in her white dress, YANK does not turn far enough to see her. Besides, his head is thrown back, he blinks upward through the murk trying to find the owner of the whistle, he brandishes his shovel murderously over his head in one hand, pounding on his chest, gorilla-like, with the other, shouting.*] Toin off dat whistle! Come down outa dere, yuh yellow, brass-buttoned, Belfast bum, yuh! Come down and I'll knock yer brains out! Yuh lousy, stinkin', yellow mut of a Catholic-moiderin' bastard! Come down and I'll moider yuh! Pullin' dat whistle on me, huh? I'll show yuh! I'll crash yer skull in! I'll drive yer teet' down yer troat! I'll slam yer nose trou de back of yer head! I'll cut yer guts out for a nickel, yuh lousy boob, yuh dirty, crummy, muck-eatin' son of a—— [*Suddenly he becomes conscious of all the other men staring at something directly behind his back. He whirls defensively with a snarling, murderous growl, crouching to spring, his lips drawn back over his teeth, his small eyes gleaming ferociously. He sees MILDRED, like a white apparition in the full light from the open furnace doors. He glares into her eyes, turned to stone. As for her, during his speech she has listened, paralyzed with horror, terror, her whole personality crushed, beaten in, collapsed, by the terrific impact of this unknown, abysmal brutality, naked and shameless. As she looks at his gorilla face, as his eyes bore into hers, she utters a low, choking cry and shrinks away from him, putting both hands up*

before her eyes to shut out the sight of his face, to protect her own. This startles YANK to a reaction. His mouth falls open, his eyes grow bewildered.]

MILDRED. [About to faint—to the ENGINEERS, who now have her one by each arm—whimperingly.] Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast! [She faints. They carry her quickly back, disappearing in the darkness at the left, rear. An iron door clangs shut. Rage and bewildered fury rush back on YANK. He feels himself insulted in some unknown fashion in the very heart of his pride. He roars.] God damn yuh! [And hurls his shovel after them at the door which has just closed. It hits the steel bulkhead with a clang and falls clattering on the steel floor. From overhead the whistle sounds again in a long, angry, insistent command.]

[Curtain.]

#### Scene IV

SCENE. The firemen's forecastle. YANK's watch has just come off duty and had dinner. Their faces and bodies shine from a soap and water scrubbing but around their eyes, where a hasty dousing does not touch, the coal dust sticks like black make-up, giving them a queer, sinister expression. YANK has not washed either face or body. He stands out in contrast to them, a blackened, brooding figure. He is seated forward on a bench in the exact attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker."<sup>7</sup> The others, most of them smoking pipes, are staring at YANK half-apprehensively, as if fearing an outburst; half-amusedly, as if they saw a joke somewhere that tickled them.

VOICES. He ain't ate nothin'.

Py golly, a fallar gat to gat grub in him.

Divil a lie.

Yank feeda da fire, no feeda da face.

Ha-ha.

He ain't even washed hisself.

He's forgot.

Hey, Yank, you forgot to wash.

YANK. [Sullenly.] Forgot nothin'! To hell wit washin'.

VOICES. It'll stick to you.

It'll get under your skin.

Give yer the bleedin' itch, that's wot.

It makes spots on you—like a leopard.

Like a piebald nigger, you mean.

Better wash up, Yank.

You sleep better.

7. Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), French sculptor. "The Thinker" is the figure of

a powerful man sitting in deep concentration of thought.

Wash up, Yank.

Wash up! Wash up!

YANK. [*Resentfully.*] Aw say, youse guys. Lemme alone. Can't youse see I'm tryin' to tink?

ALL. [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Think! [*The word has a brazen, metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

YANK. [*Springing to his feet and glaring at them belligerently.*] Yes, tink! Tink, dat's what I said. What about it? [*They are silent, puzzled by his sudden resentment at what used to be one of his jokes. YANK sits down again in the same attitude of "The Thinker."*]

VOICES. Leave him alone.

He's got a grouch on.

Why wouldn't he?

PADDY. [*With a wink at the others.*] Sure I know what's the matther. 'Tis aisy to see. He's fallen in love, I'm telling you.

ALL. [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Love! [*The word has a brazen, metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

YANK. [*With a contemptuous snort.*] Love, hell! Hate, dat's what. I've fallen in hate, get me?

PADDY. [*Philosophically.*] 'Twould take a wise man to tell one from the other. [*With a bitter, ironical scorn, increasing as he goes on.*] But I'm telling you it's love that's in it. Sure what else but love for us poor bastes in the stokehole would be bringing a fine lady, dressed like a white quanc, down a mile of ladders and steps to be havin' a look at us?

[*A growl of anger goes up from all sides.*]

LONG. [*Jumping on a bench—hectically.*] Hinsultin' us! Hinsultin' us, the bloody cow! And them bloody engineers! What right 'as they got to be exhibitin' us 's if we was bleedin' monkeys in a menagerie? Did we sign for hinsults to our dignity as 'onest workers? Is that in the ship's articles? You kin bloody well bet it ain't! But I knows why they done it. I asked a deck steward 'o she was and 'e told me. 'Er old man's a bleedin' millionaire, a bloody Capitalist! 'E's got cnuf bloody gold to sink this bleedin' ship! 'E makes arf the bloody steel in the world! 'E owns this bloody boat! And you and me, Comrades, we're 'is slaves! And the skipper and mates and engineers, they're 'is slaves! And she's 'is bloody daughter and we're all 'er slaves, too! And she gives 'er orders as 'ow she wants to see the bloody animals below decks and down they takes 'er!

[*There is a roar of rage from all sides.*]

YANK. [*Blinking at him bewilderedly.*] Say! Wait a moment! Is all dat straight goods?

LONG. Straight as string! The bleedin' steward as waits on 'em, 'e told me about 'er. And what're we goin' ter do, I arks yer? 'Ave we got ter swaller 'er hinsults like dogs? It ain't in the ship's articles. I tell yer we got a case. We kin go to law——

YANK. [*With abysmal contempt.*] Hell! Law!

ALL. [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Law! [*The word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

LONG. [*Feeling the ground slipping from under his feet—desperately.*] As voters and citizens we kin force the bloody governments——

YANK. [*With abysmal contempt.*] Hell! Governments!

ALL. [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] Governments! [*The word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

LONG. [*Hysterically.*] We're free and equal in the sight of God——

YANK. [*With abysmal contempt.*] Hell! God!

ALL. [*Repeating the word after him as one with cynical mockery.*] God! [*The word has a brazen metallic quality as if their throats were phonograph horns. It is followed by a chorus of hard, barking laughter.*]

YANK. [*Witheringly.*] Aw, join de Salvation Army!

ALL. Sit down! Shut up! Damn fool! Sea-lawyer!

[LONG *slinks back out of sight.*]

PADDY. [*Continuing the trend of his thoughts as if he had never been interrupted—bitterly.*] And there she was standing behind us, and the Second pointing at us like a man you'd hear in a circus would be saying: In this cage is a queerer kind of baboon than ever you'd find in darkest Africy. We roast them in their own sweat—and be damned if you won't hear some of thim saying they like it! [*He glances scornfully at YANK.*]

YANK. [*With a bewildered uncertain growl.*] Aw!

PADDY. And there was Yank roarin' curses and turning round wid his shovel to brain her—and she looked at him, and him at her——

YANK. [*Slowly.*] She was all white. I tought she was a ghost. Sure.

PADDY. [*With heavy, biting sarcasm.*] 'Twas love at first sight, divil a doubt of it! If you'd seen the endearin' look on her pale mug when she shriveled away with her hands over her eyes to shut out the sight of him! Sure, 'twas as if she'd seen a great hairy ape escaped from the Zoo!

YANK. [*Stung—with a growl of rage.*] Aw!

PADDY. And the loving way Yank heaved his shovel at the skull of her, only she was out the door! [*A grin breaking over his face.*] 'Twas touching, I'm telling you! It put the touch of home, swate home in the stokehole.

[*There is a roar of laughter from all.*]

YANK. [*Glaring at PADDY menacingly.*] Aw, choke dat off, see!

PADDY. [*Not heeding him—to the others.*] And her grabbin' at the Second's arm for protection. [*With a grotesque imitation of a woman's voice.*] Kiss me, Engineer dear, for it's dark down here and me old man's in Wall Street making money! Hug me tight, darlin', for I'm afeerd in the dark and me mother's on deck makin' eyes at the skipper!

[*Another roar of laughter.*]

YANK. [*Threateningly.*] Say! What yuh tryin' to do, kid me, yuh old Harp?

PADDY. Divil a bit! Ain't I wishin' myself you'd brained her?

YANK. [*Fiercely.*] I'll brain her! I'll brain her yet, wait 'n' see! [*Coming over to PADDY—slowly.*] Say, is dat what she called me—a hairy ape?

PADDY. She looked it at you if she didn't say the word itself.

YANK. [*Grinning horribly.*] Hairy ape, huh? Sure! Dat's de way she looked at me, aw right. Hairy ape! So dat's me, huh? [*Bursting into rage—as if she were still in front of him.*] Yuh skinny tart! Yuh whitefaced bum, yuh! I'll show yuh who's a ape! [*Turning to the others, bewilderment seizing him again.*] Say, youse guys. I was bawlin' him out for pullin' de whistle on us. You heard me. And den I seen youse lookin' at somep'n and I thought he'd sneaked down to come up in back of me, and I hopped around to knock him dead wit de shovel. And dere she was wit de light on her! Christ, yuh coulda pushed me over with a finger! I was scared, get me? Sure! I tought she was a ghost, see? She was all in white like dey wrap around stiffs. You seen her. Kin yuh blame me? She didn't belong, dat's what. And den when I come to and seen it was a real skoit and seen de way she was lookin' at me—like Paddy said—Christ, I was sore, get me? I don't stand for dat stuff from nobody. And I flung de shovel—on'y she'd beat it. [*Furiously.*] I wished it'd banged her! I wished it'd knocked her block off!

LONG. And be 'anged for murder or 'lectrocuted? She ain't bleedin' well worth it.

YANK. I don't give a damn what! I'd be square wit her, wouldn't I? Tink I want'er let her put somep'n over on me? Tink I'm goin' to let her git away wit dat stuff? Yuh don't know me! No one ain't never put nothin' over on me and got away wit it, see!—not dat kind of stuff—no guy and no skoit neither! I'll fix her! Maybe

she'll come down again——

VOICE. No chance, Yank. You scared her out of a year's growth.

YANK. I scared her? Why de hell should I scare her? Who de hell is she? Ain't she de same as me? Hairy ape, huh? [*With his old confident bravado.*] I'll show her I'm better'n her, if she on'y knew it. I belong and she don't, see! I move and she's dead! Twenty-five knots a hour, dat's me! Dat carries her but I make dat. She's on'y baggage. Sure! [*Again bewilderedly.*] But, Christ, she was funny lookin'! Did yuh pipe her hands? White and skinny. Yuh could see de bones trough 'em. And her mush,<sup>8</sup> dat was dead white, too. And her eyes, dey was like dey'd seen a ghost. Me, dat was! Sure! Hairy ape! Ghost, huh? Look at dat arm! [*He extends his right arm, swelling out the great muscles.*] I coulda took her wit dat, wit just my little finger even, and broke her in two. [*Again bewilderedly.*] Say, who is dat skoit, huh? What is she? What's she come from? Who made her? Who give her de noive to look at me like dat? Dis ting's got my goat right. I don't get her. She's new to me. What does a skoit like her mean, huh? She don't belong, get me! I can't see her. [*With growing anger.*] But one ting I'm wise to, aw right, aw right! Youse all kin bet your shoits I'll get even wit her. I'll show her if she tinks she—— She grinds de organ and I'm on de string, huh? I'll fix her! Let her come down again and I'll fling her in de furnace! She'll move den! She won't shiver at nothin', den! Speed, dat'll be her! She'll belong den! [*He grins horribly.*]

PADDY. She'll never come. She's had her belly-full, I'm telling you. She'll be in bed now, I'm thinking, wid ten doctors and nurses feedin' her salts to clean the fear out of her.

YANK. [*Enraged.*] Yuh tink I made her sick, too, do yuh? Just lookin' at me, huh? Hairy ape, huh? [*In a frenzy of rage.*] I'll fix her! I'll tell her where to git off! She'll git down on her knees and take it back or I'll burst de face offen her! [*Shaking one fist upward and beating on his chest with the other.*] I'll find yuh! I'm comin', d'yuh hear? I'll fix yuh, God damn yuh! [*He makes a rush for the door.*]

VOICES. Stop him!

He'll get shot!

He'll murder her!

Trip him up!

Hold him!

He's gone crazy!

Gott, he's strong!

Hold him down!

Look out for a kick!

Pin his arms!

[*They have all piled on him and, after a fierce struggle, by sheer weight of numbers have borne him to the floor just inside the door.*]

PADDY. [*Who has remained detached.*] Kape him down till he's cooled off. [*Scornfully.*] Yerra, Yank, you're a great fool. Is it payin' attention at all you are to the like of that skinny sow widout one drop of rale blood in her?

YANK. [*Frenziedly, from the bottom of the heap.*] She done me doit! She done me doit, didn't she? I'll git square wit her! I'll get her some way! Git offen me, youse guys! Lemme up! I'll show her who's a ape!

[*Curtain.*]

### Scene V

SCENE. Three weeks later. A corner of Fifth Avenue in the Fifties on a fine Sunday morning. A general atmosphere of clean, well-tidied, wide street; a flood of mellow, tempered sunshine; gentle, genteel breezes. In the rear, the show windows of two shops, a jewelry establishment on the corner, a furrier's next to it. Here the adornments of extreme wealth are tantalizingly displayed. The jeweler's window is gaudy with glittering diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, etc., fashioned in ornate tiaras, crowns, necklaces, collars, etc. From each piece hangs an enormous tag from which a dollar sign and numerals in intermittent electric lights wink out the incredible prices. The same in the furrier's. Rich furs of all varieties hang there bathed in a downpour of artificial light. The general effect is of a background of magnificence cheapened and made grotesque by commercialism, a background in tawdry disharmony with the clear light and sunshine on the street itself.

Up the side street YANK and LONG come swaggering. LONG is dressed in shore clothes, wears a black Windsor tie, cloth cap. YANK is in his dirty dungarees. A fireman's cap with black peak is cocked defiantly on the side of his head. He has not shaved for days and around his fierce, resentful eyes—as around those of LONG to a lesser degree—the black smudge of coal dust still sticks like make-up. They hesitate and stand together at the corner, swaggering, looking about them with a forced, defiant contempt.

LONG. [*Indicating it all with an oratorical gesture.*] Well, 'ere we are. Fif' Avenoo. This 'ere's their bleedin' private lane, as yer might say. [*Bitterly.*] We're trespassers 'ere. Proletarians keep orf the grass!

YANK. [*Dully.*] I don't see no grass, yuh boob. [*Staring at the sidewalk.*] Clean, ain't it? Yuh could eat a fried egg offen it. The white wings<sup>9</sup> got some job sweepin' dis up. [*Looking up and down*

9. A term once common for street cleaners, who wore white suits.



*the avenue—surlily.*] Where's all de white-collar stiffs yuh said was here—and de skouts—*her* kind?

LONG. In church, blarst 'em! Arskin' Jesus to give 'em more money.

YANK. Choich, huh? I useter go to choich onct—sure—when I was a kid. Me old man and woman, dey made me. Dey never went demselves, dough. Always got too big a head on Sunday mornin', dat was dem. [*With a grin.*] Dey was scrappers for fair, bot' of dem. On Satiday nights when dey bot' got a skinful dey could put up a bout oughter been staged at de Garden.<sup>1</sup> When dey got trough dere wasn't a chair or table wit a leg under it. Or else dey bot' jumped on me for somep'n. Dat was where I loined to take punishment. [*With a grin and a swagger.*] I'm a chip offen de old block, get me?

LONG. Did yer old man follow the sca?

YANK. Naw. Worked along shore. I runned away when me old lady croaked wit de tremens. I helped at truckin' and in de market. Den I shipped in de stokehole. Sure. Dat belongs. De rest was nothin'. [*Looking around him.*] I ain't never seen dis before. De Brooklyn waterfront, dat was where I was dragged up. [*Taking a deep breath.*] Dis ain't so bad at dat, huh?

LONG. Not bad? Well, we pays for it wiv our bloody sweat, if yer wants to know!

YANK. [*With sudden angry disgust.*] Aw, hell! I don't see no one, see—like her. All dis gives me a pain. It don't belong. Say, ain't dere a back room around dis dump? Let's go shoot a ball. All dis is too clean and quiet and dolled-up, get me! It gives me a pain.

LONG. Wait and yer'll bloody well see—

YANK. I don't wait for no one. I keep on de move. Say, what yuh drag me up here for, anyway? Tryin' to kid me, yuh simp, yuh?

LONG. Yer wants to get back at 'er, don't yer? That's what yer been sayin' every bloomin' hour since she hinsulted yer.

YANK. [*Vehemently.*] Sure ting I do! Didn't I try to get even with her in Southampton? Didn't I sneak on de dock and wait for her by de gangplank? I was goin' to spit in her pale mug, see! Sure, right in her pop-eyes! Dat woulda made me even, see? But no chanct. Dere was a whole army of plain-clothes bulls around. Dey spotted me and gimme de bum's rush. I never seen her. But I'll git square wit her yet, you watch! [*Furiously.*] De lousy tart! She tinks she kin get away wit moider—but not wit me! I'll fix her! I'll tink of a way!

LONG. [*As disgusted as he dares to be.*] Ain't that why I brought yer up 'ere—to show yer? Yer been lookin' at this 'ere 'ole affair wrong. Yer been actin' an' talkin' 's if it was all a bleedin' personal matter between yer and that bloody cow. I wants to convince yer

1. Madison Square Garden, New York.

she was on'y a representative of 'er classs. I wants to awaken yer bloody classs consciousness. Then yer'll see it's 'er classs yer've got to fight, not 'er alone. There's a 'ole mob of 'em like 'er, Gawd blind 'em!

YANK. [*Spitting on his hands—belligerently.*] De more de merrier when I gits started. Bring on de gang!

LONG. Yer'll see 'em in arf a mo', when that church lets out. [*He turns and sees the window display in the two stores for the first time.*] Blimey!<sup>2</sup> Look at that, will yer? [*They both walk back and stand looking in the jeweler's.* LONG *flies into a fury.*] Just look at this 'ere bloomin' mess! Just look at it! Look at the bleedin' prices on 'em—more'n our 'ole bloody stokehole makes in ten voyages sweatin' in 'ell! And they—'er and 'er bloody classs—buys 'em for toys to dangle on 'em! One of these 'ere would buy scoff for a starvin' family for a year!

YANK. Aw, cut de sob stuff! T' hell wit de starvin' family! Yuh'll be passin' de hat to me next. [*With naïve admiration.*] Say, dem tings is pretty, huh? Bet yuh dey'd hock for a piecc of change aw right. [*Then turning away, bored.*] But, aw hell, what good are dey? Let her have 'em. Dey don't belong no more'n she does. [*With a gesture of sweeping the jewelers into oblivion.*] All dat don't count, get me?

LONG. [*Who has moved to the furrier's—indignantly.*] And I s'pose this 'ere don't count neither—skins of poor, 'armless animals slaughtered so as 'er and 'ers can keep their bleedin' noses warm!

YANK. [*Who has been staring at something inside—with queer excitement.*] Take a slant at dat! Give it de once-over! Monkey fur—two t'ousand bucks! [*Bewilderedly.*] Is dat straight goods—monkey fur? What de hell—?

LONG. [*Bitterly.*] It's straight enuf. [*With grim humor.*] They wouldn't bloody well pay that for a 'airy ape's skin—no, nor for the 'ole livin' ape with all 'is 'cad, and body, and soul thrown in!

YANK. [*Clenching his fists, his face growing pale with rage as if the skin in the window were a personal insult.*] Trowin' it up in my face! Christ! I'll fix her!

LONG. [*Excitedly.*] Church is out. 'Ere they come, the bleedin' swine. [*After a glance at YANK's lowering face—uneasily.*] Easy goes, Comrade. Keep yer bloomin' temper. Remember force defeats itself. It ain't our weapon. We must impress our demands through peaceful means—the votes of the on-marching proletarians of the bloody world!

YANK. [*With abysmal contempt.*] Votes, hell! Votes is a joke, see. Votes for women! Let dem do it!

2. A British vulgarism, "blimey" (short for "Gawblimey," meaning "God blind me!") is rigidly banned by the respect-

able, as is the term "bloody" (from "by Our Lady!"), also used by the cockney Long.

LONG. [*Still more uneasily.*] Calm, now. Treat 'em wiv the proper contempt. Observe the bleedin' parasites but 'old yer 'orses.

YANK. [*Angrily.*] Git away from me! Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Force, dat's me! De punch, dat's me every time, see!

[*The crowd from church enter from the right, sauntering slowly and affectedly, their heads held stiffly up, looking neither to right nor left, talking in toneless, simpering voices. The women are rouged, calcimined, dyed, over-dressed to the nth degree. The men are in Prince Alberts, high hats, spats, canes, etc. A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankenstein's<sup>3</sup> in their detached, mechanical unawareness.*]

VOICES. Dear Doctor Caiaphas! He is so sincere!

What was the sermon? I dozed off.

About the radicals, my dear—and the false doctrines that are being preached.

We must organize a hundred per cent American bazaar.

And let everyone contribute one one-hundredth per cent of their income tax.

What an original idea!

We can devote the proceeds to rehabilitating the veil of the temple.

But that has been done so many times.

YANK. [*Glaring from one to the other of them—with an insulting snort of scorn.*] Huh! Huh!

[*Without seeming to see him, they make wide detours to avoid the spot where he stands in the middle of the sidewalk.*]

LONG. [*Frightenedly.*] Keep yer bloomin' mouth shut, I tells yer.

YANK. [*Viciously.*] G'wan! Tell it to Sweeney! [*He swaggers away and deliberately lurches into a top-hatted gentleman, then glares at him pugnaciously.*] Say, who d'yuh tink yuh're bumpin'? Tink yuh own de oith?

GENTLEMAN. [*Coldly and affectedly.*] I beg your pardon. [*He has not looked at YANK and passes on without a glance, leaving him bewildered.*]

LONG. [*Rushing up and grabbing YANK's arm.*] 'Ere! Come away! This wasn't what I meant. Yer'll 'ave the bloody coppers down on us.

YANK. [*Savagely—giving him a push that sends him sprawling.*] G'wan!

LONG. [*Picks himself up—hysterically.*] I'll pop orf then. 'This ain't what I meant. And whatever 'appens, yer can't blame me. [*He slinks off left.*]

YANK. 'T' hell wit youse! [*He approaches a lady—with a vicious*

3. Frankenstein created the robot monster that horribly destroyed him, in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*

(1817). In many other literary references the monster is erroneously called "Frankenstein," as here.

*grin and a smirking wink.*] Hello, Kiddo. How's every little ting? Got anything on for to-night? I know an old boiler down to de docks we kin crawl into. [*The lady stalks by without a look, without a change of pace. YANK turns to others—insultingly.*] Holy smokes, what a mug! Go hide yuhself before de horses shy at yuh. Gee, pipe de heine on dat one! Say, youse, yuh look like de stoin of a ferryboat. Paint and powder! All dolled up to kill! Yuh look like stiffs laid out for de boneyard! Aw, g'wan, de lot of yousel! Yuh give me de eye-ache. Yuh don't belong, get me! Look at me, why don't youse dare? I belong, dat's me! [*Pointing to a skyscraper across the street which is in process of construction—with bravado.*] See dat building goin' up dere? See de steel work? Steel, dat's me! Youse guys live on it and tink yuh're somep'n. But I'm in it, see! I'm de hoistin' engine dat makes it go up! I'm it—de inside and bottom of it! Sure! I'm steel and steam and smoke and de rest of it! It moves—speed—twenty-five stories up—and me at de top and bottom—movin'! Youse simps don't move. Yuh're on'y dolls I winds up to see 'm spin. Yuh're de garbage, get me—de leavins—de ashes we dump over de side! Now, what 'a' yuh gottay say? [*But as they seem neither to see nor hear him, he flies into a fury.*] Bums! Pigs! Tarts! Bitches! [*He turns in a rage on the men, bumping viciously into them but not jarring them the least bit. Rather it is he who recoils after each collision. He keeps growling.*] Git off de oith! G'wan, yuh bum! Look where yuh're goin', can't yuh? Git outa here! F'ight, why don't yuh? Put up yer mits! Don't be a dog! Fight or I'll knock yuh dead! [*But, without seeming to see him, they all answer with mechanical affected politeness.*] I beg your pardon. [*Then at a cry from one of the women, they all scurry to the furrier's window.*]

THE WOMAN. [*Ecstatically, with a gasp of delight.*] Monkey furl! [*The whole crowd of men and women chorus after her in the same tone of affected delight.*] Monkey furl!

YANK. [*With a jerk of his head back on his shoulders, as if he had received a punch full in the face—raging.*] I see yuh, all in white! I see yuh, yuh white-faced tart, yuh! Hairy ape, huh? I'll hairy ape yuh! [*He bends down and grips at the street curbing as if to pluck it out and hurl it. Foiled in this, snarling with passion, he leaps to the lamp-post on the corner and tries to pull it up for a club. Just at that moment a bus is heard rumbling up. A fat, high-hatted, spatted gentleman runs out from the side street. He calls out plaintively.*] Bus! Bus! Stop there! [*And runs full tilt into the bending, straining YANK, who is bowled off his balance.*]

YANK. [*Seeing a fight—with the roar of joy as he springs to his feet.*] At last! Bus, huh? I'll bust yuh! [*He lets drive a terrific swing,*

*his fist landing full on the fat gentleman's face. But the gentleman stands unmoved as if nothing had happened.]*

GENTLEMAN. I beg your pardon. [*Then irritably.*] You have made me lose my bus. [*He claps his hands and begins to scream:*] Officer! Officer!

*[Many police whistles shrill out on the instant and a whole platoon of policemen rush in on YANK from all sides. He tries to fight but is clubbed to the pavement and fallen upon. The crowd at the window have not moved or noticed this disturbance. The clanging gong of the patrol wagon approaches with a clamoring din.]*  
[Curtain.]

## Scene VI

SCENE. Night of the following day. A row of cells in the prison on Blackwell's Island. The cells extend back diagonally from right front to left rear. They do not stop, but disappear in the dark background as if they ran on, numberless, into infinity. One electric bulb from the low ceiling of the narrow corridor sheds its light through the heavy steel bars of the cell at the extreme front and reveals part of the interior. YANK can be seen within, crouched on the edge of his cot in the attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker." His face is spotted with black and blue bruises. A blood-stained bandage is wrapped around his head.

YANK. [*Suddenly starting as if awakening from a dream, reaches out and shakes the bars—aloud to himself, wonderingly.*] Steel. Dis is the Zoo, huh? [*A burst of hard, barking laughter comes from the unseen occupants of the cells, runs back down the tier, and abruptly ceases.*]

VOICES. [*Mockingly.*] The Zoo. That's a new name for this coop—a damn good name!

Steel, eh? You said a mouthful. This is the old iron house.

Who is that boob talkin'?

He's the bloke they brung in out of his head. The bulls had beat him up fierce.

YANK. [*Dully.*] I musta been dreamin'. I tought I was in a cage at de Zoo—but de apes don't talk, do dey?

VOICES. [*With mocking laughter.*] You're in a cage aw right.

A coop!

A pen!

A sty!

A kennel! [*Hard laughter—a pause.*]

Say, guy! Who are you? No, never mind lying. What are you?

Yes, tell us your sad story. What's your game?

What did they jug yuh for?

YANK. [*Dully.*] I was a fireman—stokin' on de liners. [*Then with sudden rage, rattling his cell bars.*] I'm a hairy ape, get me? And I'll bust youse all in de jaw if yuh don't lay off kiddin' me.

VOICES. Huh! You're a hard boiled duck, ain't you!

When you spit, it bounces! [*Laughter.*]

Aw, can it. He's a regular guy. Ain't you?

What did he say he was—a ape?

YANK. [*Defiantly.*] Sure ting! Ain't dat what youse all are—apes? [*A silence. Then a furious rattling of bars from down the corridor.*]

A VOICE. [*Thick with rage.*] I'll show yuh who's a ape, yuh bum!

VOICES. Sssh! Nix!

Can de noise!

Piano!

You'll have the guard down on us!

YANK. [*Scornfully.*] De guard? Yuh mean de keeper, don't yuh? [*Angry exclamations from all the cells.*]

VOICE. [*Placatingly.*] Aw, don't pay no attention to him. He's off his nut from the beatin'-up he got. Say, you guy! We're waitin' to hear what they landed you for—or ain't yuh tellin'?

YANK. Sure, I'll tell youse. Sure! Why de hell not? On'y—youse won't get me. Nobody gets me but me, sec? I started to tell de Judge and all he says was: "Toity days to tink it over." Tink it over! Christ, dat's all I been doin' for weeks! [*After a pause.*] I was tryin' to git even wit someone, sec?—someone dat done me doit.

VOICES. [*Cynically.*] De old stuff, I bet. Your goil, huh?

Give yuh the double-cross, huh?

That's them every time!

Did yuh beat up de odder guy?

YANK. [*Disgustedly.*] Aw, yuh're all wrong! Sure dere was a skoit in it—but not what youse mean, not dat old tripe. Dis was a new kind of skoit. She was dolled up all in white—in de stokehole. I tought she was a ghost. Sure. [*A pause.*]

VOICES. [*Whispering.*] Gee, he's still nutty.

Let him rave. It's fun listenin'.

YANK. [*Unheeding—groping in his thoughts.*] Her hands—dey was skinny and white like dey wasn't real but painted on somep'n. Dere was a million miles from me to her—twenty-five knots a hour. She was like some dead ting de cat brung in. Sure, dat's what. She didn't belong. She belonged in de window of a toy store, or on de top of a garbage can, sec! Sure! [*He breaks out angrily.*] But would yuh believe it, she had de noive to do me doit. She lamped me like she was seein' somep'n broke loose from de menagerie. Christ, yuh'd oughter seen her eyes! [*He rattles the bars of his cell furiously.*] But I'll get back at her yet, you watch! And if I can't find

her I'll take it out on de gang she runs wit. I'm wise to where dey hangs out now. I'll show her who belongs! I'll show her who's in de move and who ain't. You watch my smoke!

VOICES. [*Serious and joking.*] Dat's de talkin'!

Take her for all she's got!

What was this dame, anyway? Who was she, eh?

YANK. I dunno. First cabin stiff. Her old man's a millionaire, dey says—name of Douglas.

VOICES. Douglas? That's the president of the Steel Trust, I bet.

Sure. I scen his mug in de papers.

He's filthy with dough.

VOICE. Hey, feller, take a tip from me. If you want to get back at that dame, you better join the Wobblies. You'll get some action then.

YANK. Wobblies? What de hell's dat?

VOICE. Ain't you ever heard of the I. W. W.?<sup>4</sup>

YANK. Naw. What is it?

VOICE. A gang of blokes—a tough gang. I been readin' about 'em to-day in the paper. The guard give me the *Sunday Times*. There's a long spiel about 'em. It's from a speech made in the Senate by a guy named Senator Queen. [*He is in the cell next to YANK's. There is a rustling of paper.*] Wait'll I see if I got light enough and I'll read you. Listen. [*He reads:*] "There is a menace existing in this country to-day which threatens the vitals of our fair Republic—as foul a menace against the very life-blood of the American Eagle as was the foul conspiracy of Catiline against the eagles of ancient Rome!"<sup>5</sup>

VOICE. [*Disgustedly.*] Aw, hell! Tell him to salt de tail of dat eagle!

VOICE. [*Reading.*] "I refer to that devil's brew of rascals, jail-birds, murderers and cut-throats who libel all honest workingmen by calling themselves the Industrial Workers of the World; but in the light of their nefarious plots, I call them the Industrious *Wreckers* of the World!"

YANK. [*With vengeful satisfaction.*] Wreckers, dat's de right dope! Dat belongs! Me for dem!

VOICE. Ssshh! [*Reading.*] "This fiendish organization is a foul ulcer on the fair body of our Democracy——"

VOICE. Democracy, hell! Give him the boid, fellers—the raspberry! [*They do.*]

VOICE. Ssshh! [*Reading:*] "Like Cato I say to this Senate, the

4. The Industrial Workers of the World (1905), a labor organization aiming to unite workers on an industry-wide rather than a craft basis and having as its underlying purpose the overthrow of capitalism in favor of socialism. It dis-

integrated in the years following World War I.

5. Lucius Sergius Catilina (108?–62 B.C.) conspired against Rome, thus provoking, in 63 B.C., the famous orations of the consul Cicero.

I. W. W. must be destroyed!<sup>6</sup> For they represent an ever-present dagger pointed at the heart of the greatest nation the world has ever known, where all men are born free and equal, with equal opportunities to all, where the Founding Fathers have guaranteed to each one happiness, where Truth, Honor, Liberty, Justice, and the Brotherhood of Man are a religion absorbed with one's mother's milk, taught at our father's knee, sealed, signed, and stamped upon in the glorious Constitution of these United States!" [*A perfect storm of hisses, catcalls, boos, and hard laughter.*]

VOICES. [*Scornfully.*] Hurrah for de Fort' of July!

Pass de hat!

Liberty!

Justice!

Honor!

Opportunity!

Brotherhood!

ALL. [*With abysmal scorn.*] Aw, hell!

VOICE. Give that Queen Senator guy the bark! All togedder now—one—two—tree—— [*A terrific chorus of barking and yapping.*]

GUARD. [*From a distance.*] Quiet there, youse—or I'll git the hose. [*The noise subsides.*]

YANK. [*With growling rage.*] I'd like to catch that Senator guy alone for a second. I'd loin him some trute!

VOICE. Ssssh! Here's where he gits down to cases on the Wobblies. [*Reads:*] "They plot with fire in one hand and dynamite in the other. They stop not before murder to gain their ends, nor at the outraging of defenseless womanhood. They would tear down society, put the lowest scum in the seats of the mighty, turn Almighty God's revealed plan for the world topsy-turvy, and make of our sweet and lovely civilization a shambles, a desolation where man, God's masterpiece, would soon degenerate back to the ape!"

VOICE. [*To YANK.*] Hey, you guy. There's your ape stuff again.

YANK. [*With a growl of fury.*] I got him. So dey blow up tings, do dey? Dey turn tings round, do dey? Hey, lend me dat paper, will yuh?

VOICE. Sure. Give it to him. On'y keep it to yourself, see. We don't wanten listen to no more of that slop.

VOICE. Here you are. Hide it under your mattress.

YANK. [*Reaching out.*] Tanks. I can't read much but I kin manage. [*He sits, the paper in the hand at his side, in the attitude of Rodin's "The Thinker."* A pause. Several snores from down the corridor. Suddenly YANK jumps to his feet with a furious groan as if some appalling thought had crashed on him—bewilderedly.]

6. Marcus Porcius Cato, "The Censor" (234-149 B.C.), in waging his long campaign in the Roman Senate for war

against Carthage, ended every speech with the same words: "For the rest, I vote that Carthage must be destroyed."



Sure—her old man—president of de Steel Trust—makes half de steel in de world—steel—where I tought I belonged—drivin' trou—movin'—in dat—to make *her*—and cage me in for her to spit on! Christ! [*He shakes the bars of his cell door till the whole tier trembles. Irritated, protesting exclamations from those awakened or trying to get to sleep.*] He made dis—dis cage! Steel! It don't belong, dat's what! Cages, cells, locks, bolts, bars—dat's what it means!—holdin' me down wit him at de top! But I'll drive trou! Fire, dat melts it! I'll be fire—under de heap—fire dat never goes out—hot as hell—breakin' out in de night— [*While he has been saying this last he has shaken his cell door to a clanging accompaniment. As he comes to the "breakin' out" he seizes one bar with both hands and, putting his two feet up against the others so that his position is parallel to the floor like a monkey's, he gives a great wrench backwards. The bar bends like a licorice stick under his tremendous strength. Just at this moment the PRISON GUARD rushes in, dragging a hose behind him.*]

GUARD. [*Angrily.*] I'll loin youse bums to wake me up! [*Sees YANK.*] Hello, it's you, huh? Got the D. Ts., hey? Well, I'll cure 'em. I'll drown your snakes for yuh! [*Noticing the bar.*] Hell, look at dat bar bended! On'y a bug is strong enough for dat!

YANK. [*Glaring at him.*] Or a hairy ape, yuh big yellow bum! Look out! Here I come! [*He grabs another bar.*]

GUARD. [*Scared now—yelling off left.*] Toin de hose on, Ben!—full pressure! And call de others—and a straitjacket! [*The curtain is falling. As it hides YANK from view, there is a splattering smash as the stream of water hits the steel of YANK's cell.*]

[*Curtain.*]

## Scene VII

SCENE. Nearly a month later. An I. W. W. local near the waterfront, showing the interior of a front room on the ground floor, and the street outside. Moonlight on the narrow street, buildings massed in black shadow. The interior of the room, which is general assembly room, office, and reading-room, resembles some dingy settlement boys' club. A desk and high stool are in one corner. A table with papers, stacks of pamphlets, chairs about it, is at center. The whole is decidedly cheap, banal, commonplace, and unmysterious as a room could well be. The secretary is perched on the stool making entries in a large ledger. An eye shade casts his face into shadows. Eight or ten men, longshoremen, iron workers, and the like, are grouped about the table. Two are playing checkers. One is writing a letter. Most of them are smoking pipes. A big signboard is on the wall at the rear, "Industrial Workers of the World—Local No. 57."

[YANK comes down the street outside. He is dressed as in Scene Five. He moves cautiously, mysteriously. He comes to a point opposite the door; tiptoes softly up to it, listens, is impressed by the silence within, knocks carefully, as if he were guessing at the password to some secret rite. Listens. No answer. Knocks again a bit louder. No answer. Knocks impatiently, much louder.]

SECRETARY. [Turning around on his stool.] What the hell is that—someone knocking? [Shouts.] Come in, why don't you? [All the men in the room look up. YANK opens the door slowly, gingerly, as if afraid of an ambush. He looks around for secret doors, mystery, is taken aback by the commonplaceness of the room and the men in it, thinks he may have gotten in the wrong place, then sees the signboard on the wall and is reassured.]

YANK. [Blurts out.] Hello.

MEN. [Reservedly.] Hello.

YANK. [More easily.] I tought I'd bumped into de wrong dump.

SECRETARY. [Scrutinizing him carefully.] Maybe you have. Are you a member?

YANK. Naw, not yet. Dat's what I come for—to join.

SECRETARY. That's easy. What's your job—longshore?

YANK. Naw. Fireman—stoker on de liners.

SECRETARY. [With satisfaction.] Welcome to our city. Glad to know you people are waking up at last. We haven't got many members in your line.

YANK. Naw. Dey're all dead to de woild.

SECRETARY. Well, you can help to wake 'em. What's your name? I'll make out your card.

YANK. [Confused.] Name? Lemme tink.

SECRETARY. [Sharply.] Don't you know your own name?

YANK. Sure; but I been just Yank for so long—Bob, dat's it—Bob Smith.

SECRETARY. [Writing.] Robert Smith. [Fills out the rest of card.] Here you are. Cost you half a dollar.

YANK. Is dat all—four bits? Dat's easy. [Gives the Secretary the money.]

SECRETARY. [Throwing it in drawer.] Thanks. Well, make yourself at home. No introductions needed. There's literature on the table. Take some of those pamphlets with you to distribute aboard ship. They may bring results. Sow the seed, only go about it right. Don't get caught and fired. We got plenty out of work. What we need is men who can hold their jobs—and work for us at the same time.

YANK. Sure. [But he still stands, embarrassed and uneasy.]

SECRETARY. [Looking at him—curiously.] What did you knock for? Think we had a coon in uniform to open doors?

YANK. Naw. I tought it was locked—and dat yuh'd wanten give

me the once-over trou a peep-hole or somep'n to see if I was right.

SECRETARY. [*Alert and suspicious but with an easy laugh.*] Think we were running a crap game? That door is never locked. What put that in your nut?

YANK. [*With a knowing grin, convinced that this is all camouflage, a part of the secrecy.*] Dis burg is full of bulls, ain't it?

SECRETARY. [*Sharply.*] What have the cops to do with us? We're breaking no laws.

YANK. [*With a knowing wink.*] Sure. Youse wouldn't for woilds. Sure. I'm wise to dat.

SECRETARY. You seem to be wise to a lot of stuff none of us knows about.

YANK. [*With another wink.*] Aw, dat's aw right, sec. [*Then made a bit resentful by the suspicious glances from all sides.*] Aw, can it! Youse needn't put me trou de toid degree. Can't youse sec I belong? Sure! I'm reg'lar. I'll stick, get me? I'll shoot de woiks for youse. Dat's why I wanted to join in.

SECRETARY. [*Brezily, feeling him out.*] That's the right spirit. Only are you sure you understand what you've joined? It's all plain and above board; still, some guys get a wrong slant on us. [*Sharply.*] What's your notion of the purpose of the I. W. W.?

YANK. Aw, I know all about it.

SECRETARY. [*Sarcastically.*] Well, give us some of your valuable information.

YANK. [*Cunningly.*] I know enough not to speak outa my toin. [*Then, resentfully again.*] Aw, say! I'm reg'lar. I'm wise to de game. I know yuh got to watch your step wit a stranger. For all youse know, I might be a plain-clothes dick, or somep'n, dat's what yuh're tinkin', huh? Aw, forget it! I belong, sec? Ask any guy down to de docks if I don't.

SECRETARY. Who said you didn't?

YANK. After I'm 'nitiated, I'll show yuh.

SECRETARY. [*Astounded.*] Initiated? There's no initiation.

YANK. [*Disappointed.*] Ain't there no password—no grip nor nothin'?

SECRETARY. What'd you think this is—the Elks—or the Black Hand?<sup>7</sup>

YANK. De Elks, hell! De Black Hand, dey're a lot of yellow back-stickin' Ginees. Naw. Dis is a man's gang, ain't it?

SECRETARY. You said it! That's why we stand on our two feet in the open. We got no secrets.

YANK. [*Surprised but admiringly.*] Yuh mean to say yuh always

7. The Elks is a fraternal organization; by contrast, the Black Hand was an Italian underworld organization, formed about 1868, which conducted criminal

activities in the United States. Hence "Ginees" (Guineas), meaning "Italians," in Yank's reply.

run wide open—like dis?

SECRETARY. Exactly.

YANK. Den yuh sure got your noive wit youse!

SECRETARY. [*Sharply.*] Just what was it made you want to join us? Come out with that straight.

YANK. Yuh call me? Well, I got noive, too! Here's my hand. Yuh wanten blow tings up, don't yuh? Well, dat's me! I belong!

SECRETARY. [*With pretended carelessness.*] You mean change the unequal conditions of society by legitimate direct action—or with dynamite?

YANK. Dynamite! Blow it offen de oith—steel—all de cages—all de factories, steamers, buildings, jails—de Steel Trust and all dat makes it go.

SECRETARY. So—that's your idea, eh? And did you have any special job in that line you wanted to propose to us? [*He makes a sign to the men, who get up cautiously one by one and group behind YANK.*]

YANK. [*Boldly.*] Sure, I'll come out wit it. I'll show youse I'm one of de gang. Dere's dat millionaire guy, Douglas—

SECRETARY. President of the Steel Trust, you mean? Do you want to assassinate him?

YANK. Naw, dat don't get you nothin'. I mean blow up de factory, de woiks, where he makes de steel. Dat's what I'm after—to blow up de steel, knock all de steel in de woild up to de moon. Dat'll fix tings! [*Eagerly, with a touch of bravado.*] I'll do it by me lonesome! I'll show yuh! Tell me where his woiks is, how to git there, all de dope. Gimme de stuff, de old butter—and watch me do de rest! Watch de smoke and sec it move! I don't give a damn if dey nab me—as long as it's done! I'll soive life for it—and give 'em de laugh! [*Half to himself.*] And I'll write her a letter and tell her de hairy ape done it. Dat'll square tings.

SECRETARY. [*Stepping away from YANK.*] Very interesting. [*He gives a signal. The men, huskies all, throw themselves on YANK and before he knows it they have his legs and arms pinioned. But he is too flabbergasted to make a struggle, anyway. They feel him over for weapons.*]

MAN. No gat, no knife. Shall we give him what's what and put the boots to him?

SECRETARY. No. He isn't worth the trouble we'd get into. He's too stupid. [*He comes closer and laughs mockingly in YANK's face.*] Ho-ho! By God, this is the biggest joke they've put up on us yet. Hey, you Jokel! Who sent you—Burns or Pinkerton? No, by God, you're such a bonehead I'll bet you're in the Secret Service! Well, you dirty spy, you rotten agent provocator, you can go back and

tell whatever skunk is paying you blood-money for betraying your brothers that he's wasting his coin. You couldn't catch a cold. And tell him that all he'll ever get on us, or ever has got, is just his own sneaking plots that he's framed up to put us in jail. We are what our manifesto says we are, neither more nor less—and we'll give him a copy of that any time he calls. And as for you— [*He glares scornfully at YANK, who is sunk in an oblivious stupor.*] Oh hell, what's the use of talking? You're a brainless ape.

YANK. [*Aroused by the word to fierce but futile struggles.*] What's dat, yuh Shecny bum, yuh!

SECRETARY. Throw him out, boys. [*In spite of his struggles, this is done with gusto and éclat. Propelled by several parting kicks, YANK lands sprawling in the middle of the narrow cobbled street. With a growl he starts to get up and storm the closed door, but stops bewildered by the confusion in his brain, pathetically impotent. He sits there, brooding, in as near to the attitude of Rodin's "Thinker" as he can get in his position.*]

YANK. [*Bitterly.*] So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider. Aw, to hell wit 'em! Dey're in de wrong pew—de same old bull—soap-boxes and Salvation Army—no guts! Cut out an hour offen de job a day and make me happy! Gimme a dollar more a day and make me happy! Tree square a day, and cauliflowes in de front yard—ekal rights—a woman and kids—a lousy vote—and I'm all fixed for Jesus, huh? Aw, hell! What does dat get yuh? Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. Feedin' your face—sinkers and coffee—dat don't touch it. It's way down—at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops. Dat's me now—I don't tick, see?—I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see—it's all dark, get me? It's all wrong! [*He turns a bitter mocking face up like an ape gibbering at the moon.*] Say, youse up dere, Man in de Moon, yuh look so wise, gimme de answer, huh? Slip me de inside dope, de information right from de stable—where do I get off at, huh?

A POLICEMAN. [*Who has come up the street in time to hear this last—with grim humor.*] You'll get off at the station, you boob, if you don't get up out of that and keep movin'.

YANK. [*Looking up at him—with a hard, bitter laugh.*] Sure! Lock me up! Put me in a cage! Dat's de on'y answer yuh know. G'wan, lock me up!

POLICEMAN. What you been doin'?

YANK. Enuf to gimme life for! I was born, see? Sure, dat's de charge. Write it in de blotter. I was born, get me!

POLICEMAN. [*Jocosely.*] God pity your old woman! [*Then matter-*

*of-fact.*] But I've no time for kidding. You're soused. I'd run you in but it's too long a walk to the station. Come on now, get up, or I'll fan your ears with this club. Beat it now! [*He hauls YANK to his feet.*]

YANK. [*In a vague mocking tone.*] Say, where do I go from here?

POLICEMAN. [*Giving him a push—with a grin, indifferently.*] Go to hell.

[*Curtain.*]

### Scene VIII

SCENE. Twilight of the next day. The monkey house at the Zoo. One spot of clear gray light falls on the front of one cage so that the interior can be seen. The other cages are vague, shrouded in shadow from which chatterings pitched in a conversational tone can be heard. On the one cage a sign from which the word "Gorilla" stands out. The gigantic animal himself is seen squatting on his haunches on a bench in much the same attitude as Rodin's "Thinker." Yank enters from the left. Immediately a chorus of angry chattering and screeching breaks out. The gorilla turns his eyes but makes no sound or move.

YANK. [*With a hard, bitter laugh.*] Welcome to your city, huh? Hail, hail, de gang's all here! [*At the sound of his voice the chattering dies away into an attentive silence. YANK walks up to the gorilla's cage and, leaning over the railing, stares in at its occupant, who stares back at him, silent and motionless. There is a pause of dead stillness. Then YANK begins to talk in a friendly confidential tone, half-mockingly, but with a deep undercurrent of sympathy.*] Say, yuh're some hard-lookin' guy, ain't yuh? I seen lots of tough nuts dat de gang called gorillas, but yuh're de foist real one I ever seen. Some chest yuh got, and shoulders, and dem arms and mits! I bet yuh got a punch in eider fist dat'd knock 'em all silly! [*This with genuine admiration. The gorilla, as if he understood, stands upright, swelling out his chest and pounding on it with his fist. YANK grins sympathetically.*] Sure, I get yuh. Yuh challenge de whole woild, huh? Yuh got what I was sayin' even if yuh muffed de woids. [*Then bitterness creeping in.*] And why wouldn't yuh get me? Ain't we both members of de same club—de Hairy Apes? [*They stare at each other—a pause—then YANK goes on slowly and bitterly.*] So yuh're what she seen when she looked at me, de white-faced tart! I was you to her, get me? On'y outa de cage—broke out—free to moider her, see? Sure! Dat's what she tought. She wasn't wise dat I was in a cage, too—worser'n yours—sure—a damn sight—'cause you got some chanct to bust loose—but me—— [*He grows confused.*] Aw, hell! It's all wrong, ain't it? [*A pause.*] I s'pose yuh wanter know

what I'm doin' here, huh? I been warmin' a bench down to de Battery—ever since last night. Sure. I seen de sun come up. Dat was pretty, too—all red and pink and green. I was lookin' at de skyscrapers—steel—and all de ships comin' in, sailin' out, all over de oith—and dey was steel, too. De sun was warm, dey wasn't no clouds, and dere was breeze blowin'. Sure, it was great stuff. I got it aw right—what Paddy said about dat bein' de right dope—on'y I couldn't get in it, see? I couldn't belong in dat. It was over my head. And I kept tinkin'—and den I beat it up here to see what youse was like. And I waited till dey was all gone to git yuh alone. Say, how d'yuh feel sittin' in dat pen all de time, havin' to stand for 'em comin' and starin' at yuh—de white-faced, skinny tarts and de boobs what marry 'em—makin' fun of yuh, laughin' at yuh, gittin' scared of yuh—damn 'em! [*He pounds on the rail with his fist. The gorilla rattles the bars of his cage and snarls. All the other monkeys set up an angry chattering in the darkness. YANK goes on excitedly.*] Sure! Dat's de way it hits me, too. On'y yuh're lucky, see? Yuh don't belong wit 'em and yuh know it. But me, I belong wit 'em—but I don't, see? Dey don't belong wit me, dat's what. Get me? Tinkin' is hard—[*He passes one hand across his forehead with a painful gesture. The gorilla growls impatiently. YANK goes on gropingly.*] It's dis way, what I'm drivin' at. Youse can sit and dope dream in de past, green woods, de jungle and de rest of it. Den yuh belong and dey don't. Den yuh kin laugh at 'em, see? Yuh're de champ of de woild. But me—I ain't got no past to tink in, nor nothin' dat's comin', on'y what's now—and dat don't belong. Sure, you're de best off! Yuh can't tink, can yuh? Yuh can't talk neider. But I kin make a bluff at talkin' and tinkin'—a'most git away wit it—a'most!—and dat's where de joker comes in. [*He laughs.*] I ain't on oith and I ain't in heaven, get me? I'm in de middle tryin' to separate 'em, takin' all de woist punches from bot' of 'em. Maybe dat's what dey call hell, huh? But you, yuh're at de bottom. You belong! Sure! Yuh're de on'y one in de woild dat does, yuh lucky stiff! [*The gorilla growls proudly.*] And dat's why dey gotter put yuh in a cage, see? [*The gorilla roars angrily.*] Sure! Yuh get me. It beats it when you try to tink it or talk it—it's way down—deep—behind—you 'n' me we feel it. Sure! Bot' members of dis club! [*He laughs—then in a savage tone.*] What de hell! T' hell wit it! A little action, dat's our meat! Dat belongs! Knock 'em down and keep bustin' 'em till dey croaks yuh wit a gat—wit steel! Sure! Arc yuh game? Dey've looked at youse, ain't dey—in a cage? Wanter git even? Wanter wind up like a sport 'stead of croakin' slow in dere? [*The gorilla roars an emphatic affirmative, YANK goes on with a sort of furious exaltation.*] Sure! Yuh're reg'lar! Yuh'll stick to de finish! Me 'n' you, huh?—bot' members of this club! We'll put up one last star

bout dat'll knock 'em offen deir seats! Dey'll have to make de cages stronger after we're trou! [*The gorilla is straining at his bars, growling, hopping from one foot to the other. YANK takes a jimmy from under his coat and forces the lock on the cage door. He throws this open.*] Pardon from de governor! Step out and shake hands. I'll take yuh for a walk down Fif' Avenoo. We'll knock 'em offen de oith and croak wit de band playin'. Come on, Brother. [*The gorilla scrambles gingerly out of his cage. Goes to YANK and stands looking at him. YANK keeps his mocking tone—holds out his hand.*] Shake—de secret grip of our order. [*Something, the tone of mockery, perhaps, suddenly enrages the animal. With a spring he wraps his huge arms around YANK in a murderous hug. There is a crackling snap of crushed ribs—a gasping cry, still mocking, from YANK.*] Hey, I didn't say kiss me! [*The gorilla lets the crushed body slip to the floor; stands over it uncertainly, considering; then picks it up, throws it in the cage, shuts the door and shuffles off menacingly into the darkness at left. A great uproar of frightened chattering and whimpering comes from the other cages. Then YANK moves, groaning, opening his eyes, and there is silence. He mutters painfully.*] Say—dey oughter match him—wit Zybszko.<sup>9</sup> He got me, aw right. I'm trou. Even him didn't tink I belonged. [*Then, with sudden passionate despair.*] Christ, where do I get off at? Where do I fit in? [*Checking himself as suddenly.*] Aw, what de hell! No squawkin', see! No quittin', get me! Croak wit your boots on! [*He grabs hold of the bars of the cage and hauls himself painfully to his feet—looks around him bewilderedly—forces a mocking laugh.*] In de cage, huh? [*In the strident tones of a circus barker.*] Ladies and gents, step forward and take a slant at de onc and only—[*His voice weakening.*]—one and original—Hairy Ape from de wilds of— [He slips in a heap on the floor and dies. The monkeys set up a chattering, whimpering wail. And, perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs.]  
[Curtain.]

1922

9. Misspelling for Stanislaus Zbyszko, a wrestler, then in his prime.





# Poets in Waste Land

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## EZRA POUND

(1885-)

Ezra Loomis Pound was born in Hailey, Idaho, on October 30, 1885. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and then Hamilton College, from which he was graduated in 1905. He returned to the University of Pennsylvania for graduate study in romance languages. He took an M.A. in 1906, spent the summer abroad, and returned to Pennsylvania on a fellowship for another year of study in Renaissance literature. In 1908 he again went abroad, and by 1920 regarded himself as a permanent expatriate.

By 1912, he was the author of seven volumes which identified him as a distinct poetic personality, who combined a command of the older tradition with impressive and often daring originality. When Harriet Monroe in 1912 issued from Chicago the prospectus for her new magazine, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, Pound characteristically proposed himself as its foreign correspondent.

He was a prolific essayist for the little magazines of New York, London, and Paris, which then constituted a large and ex-

citing literary world. He unselfishly and persistently championed the experimental and often unpopular artists whom he approved—Antheil, the musician; Gaudier-Brzeska, pioneer abstractionist sculptor, killed in World War I; and James Joyce, among others. Most important of all, perhaps, was the advice and encouragement which he gave to T. S. Eliot, who has candidly acknowledged the value of Pound's assistance in the final revision of *The Waste Land* and in connection with other poems of that period. Both poets of independent power and interests, they became the early leaders in restoring to poetry the use of literary reference as an imaginative instrument. Such referential figures of speech assume that the poet and his readers share a common cultural inheritance. In the present age of increasing complexity, diffuseness, and specialization of knowledge, both Pound and Eliot required of their readers a familiarity with the classics, the productions of the Italian and English Renaissance, and specialized areas of Continental literature, including the works of

the French symbolists. After *The Waste Land* (1922), Eliot's poetry became somewhat less difficult in this respect, while Pound's continued to draw fundamentally upon his formidably recondite culture. A large part of his work consists of "reconstructions" in modern English of poems from earlier literatures, chiefly Greek, Latin, Italian, Provençal, and Chinese. Pound quite consciously set this course for himself, and called the often-expanded volume of his poems his *Personae*, or "masks," referring to the conventionalized masks worn by actors in the Greek drama.

A final obstacle for the reader is the violence of Pound's distrust of capitalism and his allegiance to the utopian concept of "social credit." Nevertheless, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), considered as a satire of the materialistic forces involved in World War I, is a masterpiece. In *The Cantos*, begun in 1917, the satire became intensified. The progressive series, now exceeding the proposed limit of one hundred poems, are loosely connected cantos, like Dante's *Divina Commedia* in three sections, but representing a comedy human, not divine, dealing with the wreck of civilizations by reason of the infidelity of mankind in the three epochs—the ancient world, the Renaissance, and the modern period. With *The Pisan Cantos* of 1948 and *Section: Rock Drill* (1956), *Cantos I* to *XCV* had all been published except for two. By 1960 they numbered *CIX*, badly needing explication. A considerable number contain lyrical passages of

genuine power; they are in places supremely witty, and many of their topical references are shrewd and valuable. But their complexity renders them controversial. Somewhat resembling *Finnegan's Wake* in structure, Pound's vast poem now has a position similar to that of Joyce's novel before critical scholarship provided its explication. Pound's critics have developed a voluminous commentary, most of it still unpublished, concerning *The Cantos*, which, like Joyce's work, employs the complex association of scholarly lore, anthropology, modern history and personages, private history and witticisms, and obscure literary interpolations in various languages, including Chinese ideograms.

In 1924 Pound left Paris for Rapallo, Italy, attracted by Mussolini's faithless promises of democratic state socialism. During World War II, Pound, on behalf of the Italian government, conducted radio broadcasts beamed at the American troops. He was returned to the United States as a citizen accused of treason, but on examination he was declared insane. The treason charges were dismissed in 1958. Pound now lives in Italy.

Principal earlier poetry volumes are *A Lume Spento*, 1908; *A Quinzaine for This Yule*, 1908; *Personae*, 1909, reprinted and enlarged, 1913 to 1926; *Exultations*, 1909; *Provença*, 1910, selected poems; *Canzoni*, 1911; *The Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*, 1912; *Ripostes*, London, 1912, Boston, 1913, new edition, London, 1915; *Personae and Exultations*, 1913; *Cathay*, 1915; *Lustra*, London, 1916, New York, 1917; *Quia Pauper Amavi*, undated, ca. 1919, containing "Homage to Sextus Propertius" and *Cantos I-III*; *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, 1920; *Umbra*, 1920, a collection from previous vol-

umes; *Poems 1918-1921*, 1921; *Personae: The Collected Poems*, 1926; and *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, new edition, 1934. T. S. Eliot first edited a *Selected Poems* in 1928, of which the newest edition is 1959; a *New York Selected Poems* was issued in 1949 and 1957.

Publication of *The Cantos* began when *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* printed one in each of three issues, June to August, 1917, collected as "Three Cantos" in the New York edition of *Lustra*, 1917. Their number was gradually increased, with revision and rearrangement, in several volumes: *The Pisan Cantos*, *LXXI to LXXXV*, 1948, the collection of the eighty-five in *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 1948, and *Cantos*, 1954. *Section: Rock Drill*, 1956, brought the number to ninety-five, and *Throne*, 1959, to one hundred and nine. Pound's translation of *Sophokles' Women of Trachis* appeared in 1957.

Pound's voluminous prose contains some stimulating critical work. Typical volumes are *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 1910, a biography; *Pavannes and Divisions*, 1918; *Instigations*, 1920; *Indiscretions* (autobiographical), 1923; *The ABC of Reading*, 1934; *Culture*, 1938; *Money Pamphlets by Pound*, 1950-1952; *Pavannes and Divagations*, 1958; and *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 1954, edited by T. S. Eliot. *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941* was edited by

D. D. Paige in 1950. Two of Pound's translations have bearing on the orientalism of *The Cantos*: *Confucian Analects . . .*, 1950, and *Shih Ching: The Classic Anthology defined by Confucius*.

Critical studies include T. S. Eliot's introduction to the *Selected Poems*, 1928, and the same author's unsigned volume, *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry*, 1917. A fundamental study is R. P. Blackmur, "Masks of Ezra Pound," reprinted from *Hound and Horn* (March, 1934) as a chapter of Blackmur's *The Double Agent*, 1935. Alice Admur published *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*, 1936. Pound's receipt of the Bollingen Prize in Poetry for 1948 resulted in two studies of his position: *The Case Against the Saturday Review*, essays by several hands, edited by the editors of *Poetry*, 1949; and *The Case of Ezra Pound*, edited by Charles Norman, 1948. Explanation or discussion of *The Cantos* may profitably be sought in the following: *The Analyst* (No. 1, 1953), continued serially, Department of English, Northwestern University; H. H. Watts, *Ezra Pound and "The Cantos"*, London, 1951. John H. Edwards and William Vasse, Jr., compiled an *Annotated Index to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 1957. A collection of criticisms by several hands is *An Examination of Ezra Pound*, edited by Peter Russell, 1950. J. J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley*, 1955, is useful.

## A Virginal

No, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.  
 I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness,  
 For my surrounding air has a new lightness;  
 Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly  
 And left me cloaked as with a gauze of æther;  
 As with sweet leaves; as with a subtle clearness.  
 Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness  
 To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.

5

No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavor,  
 Soft as spring wind that's come from birchen bowers.  
 Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,  
 As winter's wound with her sleight hand she staunches,  
 Hath of the trees a likeness of the savor:  
 As white their bark, so white this lady's hours.

10

Sestina: Altaforte<sup>1</sup>*Loquitur: 'En' Bertrands de Born.*<sup>2</sup>*Dante Alighieri put this man in hell for that he was a stirrer up of strife.*<sup>3</sup>*Eccovi!*<sup>4</sup>*Judge ye!**Have I dug him up again?**The scene is at his castle, Altaforte. 'Papiols' is his jongleur.**'The Leopard,' the 'device' of Richard Cœur de Lion.*<sup>5</sup>

## 1

Damn it all, all this our South stinks peace.

You whoreson dog, Papiols, come! Let's to music!

I have no life save when the swords clash.

But ah! when I see the standards gold, vair,<sup>6</sup> purple, opposing

And the broad fields beneath them turn crimson,

Then howls my heart nigh mad with rejoicing.

5

## 2

In hot summer have I great rejoicing

When the tempests kill the earth's foul peace,

And the lightnings from black heav'n flash crimson,

And the fierce thunders roar me their music

And the winds shriek through the clouds mad, opposing,

And through all the riven skies God's swords clash.

10

## 3

Hell grant soon we hear the swords clash!

And the shrill neighs of destriers<sup>7</sup> in battle rejoicing,

Spiked breast to spiked breast opposing!

Better one hour's stour<sup>8</sup> than a year's peace

With fat boards, bawds, wine and frail music!

Bah! there's no wine like the blood's crimson!

15

## 4

And I love to see the sun rise blood-crimson.

And I watch his spears through the dark clash

20

1. This poem represents Pound's gift for reconstructing in English a poem from another language. The original was a Provençal poem, "In Praise of War," by Bertrand de Born (1140?-1210?), famous knight and troubadour, master of satire, and "goad of \* \* \* the barons of the Province." The sestina, a difficult lyric form, substitutes for conventional end rhyme a sequence of six words, in various prescribed patterns, as the concluding words of the six lines of each of six stanzas. An additional tercet forms an envoy, as here. Like the ballad, the sestina was origin-

ally intended to be recited or chanted.

2. Speaker: Bertrands de Born.

3. Cf. *Inferno*, xxviii, 134.

4. Behold!

5. Richard Lion-Hearted, king of England (1189-1199), famous warrior of the Third Crusade, wore a leopard on his shield.

6. A species of squirrel skin used in costly medieval clothing, and represented in heraldry by a series of small shields alternately argent (silver) and azure (blue).

7. Archaic term meaning "war horses."

8. Archaic term meaning "combat."

And it fills all my heart with rejoicing  
And pries wide my mouth with fast music  
When I see him so scorn and defy peace,  
His lone might 'gainst all darkness opposing.

5

The man who fears war and squats opposing 25  
My words for stour, hath no blood of crimson  
But is fit only to rot in womanish peace  
Far from where worth's won and the swords clash  
For the death of such sluts I go rejoicing;  
Yea, I fill all the air with my music. 30

6

Papiols, Papiols, to the music!  
There's no sound like to swords swords opposing,  
No cry like the battle's rejoicing  
When our elbows and swords drip the crimson  
And our charges 'gainst 'The Leopard's' rush clash. 35  
May God damn for ever all who cry 'Peace!'

7

And let the music of the swords make them crimson!  
Hell grant soon we hear again the swords clash!  
Hell blot black for alway the thought 'Peace!'

1909

## From Hugh Selwyn Mauberley<sup>9</sup>

### *Life and Contacts*

Vocat Æstus in Umbram<sup>1</sup>

—NEMESIANUS EC. IV.

#### I

#### E. P. ODE POUR L'ELECTION DE SON SÉPULCHRE<sup>2</sup>

For three years, out of key with his time,  
He strove to resuscitate the dead art

9. The initial sequence of five poems printed here epitomizes "Mauberley," which in 1919 comprised twelve poems and the "Envoi" (q.v.), in 1920 a concluding sequence of five. Eliot called this "a document of an epoch"; it is also, in part, a summation of Ezra Pound's experience with that epoch, the period of the first World War; and it marked his alienated withdrawal into Italian exile.

1. Latin, meaning "Summer summons us unto the shadow." Of Nemesianus (fl. 283 A.D.), the Roman author of this line, little survives except his four

*Eclogues*.

2. "E. P. Ode on the Choice of His Tomb." Cf. Pierre de Ronsard, *Odes*, Book iv, *L'Election de son sépulchre*, and cf. Stéphane Mallarmé's "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe." But obviously, Pound's initials also are "E. P." Mallarmé's poem contains the line, *Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu*, which Eliot paraphrased, in *Little Gidding*, as, "To purify the dialect of the tribe." Pound shared this aim and gave expression to it in the first two sections of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley."

Of poetry; to maintain "The sublime"<sup>3</sup>  
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born 5  
In a half-savage country, out of date;  
Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;  
Capaneus;<sup>4</sup> trout for factitious bait;  
"Ἰδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ', ὅσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ"<sup>5</sup>  
Caught in the unstopped ear; 10  
Giving the rocks small lee-way<sup>6</sup>  
The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope<sup>7</sup> was Flaubert,<sup>8</sup>  
He fished by obstinate isles;  
Observed the elegance of Circe's<sup>9</sup> hair 15  
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.<sup>1</sup>

Unaffected by 'the march of events,'  
He passed from men's memory in *l'an trentiesme*  
*De son eage*;<sup>2</sup> the case presents  
No adjunct to the Muses' diadem. 20

## II

'The age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace,  
Something for the modern stage,  
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;  
Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries 25  
Of the inward gaze;  
Better mendacities  
Than the classics in paraphrase!

3. Achievement of "the sublime" (cf. Longinus or Kant), involved a choice of literary materials and style of exalted spiritual significance.

4. Capaneus of Argos, in Aeschylus' *The Seven Against Thebes*, swore he would force entrance into Thebes in spite of Jove himself. The god, for this impiety, struck him dead with a thunderbolt.

5. The Greek line, sung by the Sirens in Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XII, l. 189, has here been slightly altered to read: "For we know all the things that are in Troy." Odysseus plugged his sailors' ears with wax, so that they would not leap overboard when they heard the Sirens. The "unstopped ear" mentioned in the next line was that of Odysseus, who had had himself bound to the mast for safety. The references to Odysseus' hazardous journey homeward continue to the end of the next stanza.

6. Scylla, which with the whirlpool Charybdis, formed a dangerous strait

that Odysseus escaped only with the loss of six men.

7. Penelope, Odysseus' wife, clung faithfully to the hope of his return for many years, in spite of the importunities and plots of powerful suitors.

8. Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), "father of French realism," whose painstaking concern for "the exact word" caused critics to refer to his style as "chiseled" or "sculptured." See l. 32, below.

9. Circe, a beautiful sorceress, ruled a domain devoted to sloth and carnal appetite, where Odysseus lingered unduly, although his men were transformed into swine.

1. Sundials usually bear inscriptions referring ominously to the flight of time.

2. Cf. François Villon (1431-1463?); the first line of his *Grand Testament* reads: "In the thirtieth year of my life." Pound has changed "my" to "his." The phrase was re-echoed by a number of others—e.g., Eliot and MacLeish.

The 'age demanded' chiefly a mould in plaster,  
 Made with no loss of time, 30  
 A prose kinema,<sup>3</sup> not, assuredly, alabaster  
 Or the 'sculpture' of rhyme.

III

'The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.  
 Supplants the mousseline of Cos,  
 'The pianola 'replaces' 35  
 Sappho's barbitos.<sup>4</sup>

Christ follows Dionysus,  
 Phallic<sup>5</sup> and ambrosial  
 Made way for macerations;  
 Caliban casts out Ariel.<sup>6</sup> 40

All things are a flowing,  
 Sage Heraclitus<sup>7</sup> says;  
 But a tawdry cheapness  
 Shall outlast our days.

Even the Christian beauty 45  
 Defects—after Samothrace;<sup>8</sup>  
 We see τὸ καλὸν<sup>9</sup>  
 Decreed in the market-place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,  
 Nor the saint's vision. 50  
 We have the Press for wafer,<sup>1</sup>  
 Franchise for circumcision.

All men, in law, are equals.  
 Free of Pisistratus,<sup>2</sup>  
 We choose a knave or an eunuch 55  
 To rule over us.

O bright Apollo,  
 τὴν ἀνδρα, τὴν ἥρωα, τίνα θεὸν<sup>3</sup>

3. (l. 31) Greek, meaning "motion"; cf. "cinema" for "motion picture."

4. From the Greek *barbiton*, "a lyre," here associated with the poetess Sappho. The "pianola," with which it is contrasted, is a mechanical player piano.

5. The Greek worship of Dionysus involved phallic rituals; cf. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

6. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare contrasts these two fantastic characters: Caliban—enormous, earthy, and stupid; and the sprite Ariel—ethereal and beautiful.

7. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (fl. 550 B.C.) emphasized the concept

of "flux," or change; cf. in T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, fragments of his work.

8. The Greek island of Samothrace was the supposed seat of the Cabiri, occult pre-Hellenic divinities regarded by the later Greeks as an attractive mystery.

9. "The beautiful," a common phrase in the literature of philosophy.

1. Sacrificial bread of religious ritual; specifically, of the Christian Eucharist.

2. Pisistratus (died 527 B.C.), thrice the dictator of the Athenian state.

3. Pindar's Second Olympian Ode, l. 2, reads, in the reverse of this order, "What God, what hero, what man shall we loudly praise?"

What god, man, or hero  
Shall I place a tin wreath upon! 60

## IV

These fought in any case,  
and some believing,  
pro domo,<sup>4</sup> in any case . . .

Some quick to arm,  
some for adventure, 65  
some from fear of weakness,  
some from fear of censure,  
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,  
learning later . . .

some in fear, learning love of slaughter; 70

Died some, pro patria,  
non 'dulce' non 'et decor'⁵ . . .

walked eye-deep in hell  
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving  
came home, home to a lie, 75  
home to many deccits,  
home to old lies and new infamy;  
usury age-old and age-thick  
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before. 80

Young blood and high blood,  
fair cheeks, and fine bodies;

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,  
disillusions as never told in the old days, 85  
hysterias, trench confessions,  
laughter out of dead bellies.

## V

There died a myriad,  
And of the best, among them,  
For an old bitch gone in the teeth, 90  
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,  
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,  
For a few thousand battered books. 95

\* \* \*

4. The Latin phrase, "for home," anticipates ll. 71-72.

5. Cf. Horace, *Odes*, III, ii. 1. 13: *Dulce*

*et decorum est pro patria mori* ["It is sweet and appropriate to die for one's country"].



*Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1919)

Go, dumb born book,  
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:<sup>7</sup>  
Hadst thou but song  
As thou hast subjects known,  
Then were there cause in thee that should condone  
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie,  
And build her glories their longevity.

Tell her that sheds  
Such treasure in the air,  
Recking naught else but that her graces give  
Life to the moment,  
I would bid them live  
As roses might, in magic amber laid,  
Red overwrought with orange and all made  
One substance and one colour  
Braving time.

Tell her that goes  
With song upon her lips  
But sings not out the song, nor knows  
The maker of it, some other mouth,  
May be as fair as hers,  
Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,  
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,  
Siftings on siftings in oblivion,  
Till change hath broken down  
All things save Beauty alone.

1920

6. Ends the 1919 section of the volume; the poems of "Mauberley 1920" follow. Cf. the familiar "Go, Lovely Rose," by Edmund Waller (died 1687), here "re-constructed" in Pound's terms.

7. Henry Lawes (1596-1662), English composer and song writer, associated with John Milton.

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT

(1888-)

As compared with other major poets, T. S. Eliot has published relatively little, but his excellence has been generally recognized ever since his first major poem, *The Waste Land*, ap-

peared in 1922. However, he has remained a controversial figure. He has been regarded almost with reverence by a coterie of critics; his own literary criticism has been influential, especially in

its support of that form of poetry which employs intellectual discipline and cultural memory in preference to more accessible and more sensuous images and emotional suggestions. Eliot has been criticized for "unnecessary obscurity" or for "authoritarian severity"; but numerous other genuine poets of idea are instrumentally more complex, and his intellectual severity draws interest by its systematic traditionalism. Of his craftsmanship, his integrity, and his power, however, there has been little doubt.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on September 26, 1888, of New England stock, his Eliot grandfather having gone west as a Unitarian minister. He studied at private academies, entered Harvard at eighteen, and there attained the M.A. degree in 1910. A student of languages and belles-lettres, especially the writings of the Elizabethans and the metaphysical poets, and the literature of the Italian Renaissance, he was also attracted to the study of philosophy, taught at Harvard by such men as Irving Babbitt and George Santayana. In the winter of 1910 he went to the University of Paris, where he attended the lectures of the philosopher Henri Bergson, among others. Again at Harvard (1911-1914), he studied Sanskrit and Oriental philosophy in the graduate school, was an assistant in the philosophy department, and in 1914 was awarded a traveling fellowship for study in Germany.

At Merton College, Oxford, in 1915, he again studied philosophy. That year he married the

daughter of a British artist. For two years he taught in English academies, while bringing to fruition his first book of poems. In 1917, he published *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Few poets in their first book have so prophetically suggested the direction and power of what was to follow. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" still holds its place in the development of Eliot's poetry as a whole; like much of his later work it concerns various aspects of the frustration and enfeeblement of individual character as seen in perspective with the decay of states, peoples, and religious faith.

From 1918 to 1924 Eliot was in the service of Lloyd's Bank in London. In 1920 his fourth volume, *Poems*, with "Gerontion" as its leading poem, again developed the same general pattern of ideas. It is remarkable that he excluded almost no poem of his early volumes from his later collected works. In 1920 also appeared *The Sacred Wood*, containing, among other essays, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," the earliest statement of his aesthetics. The aesthetic principal which he first elaborated in this essay provided a useful instrument for modern criticism. It relates primarily to the individual work of art, the poem conceived as a made object, an organic thing in itself, whose concrete elements are true correlatives of the artist's imagination and experience with respect to that poem. The degree to which fusion and concentration of intellect, feeling, and experience were achieved was Eliot's criterion for judging the poem.

Such ideas he developed in other essays which have been influential in promoting the contemporary tendency toward the intrinsic analysis of poetry.

Also in 1920, Eliot began *The Waste Land*, one of the major works of modern literature. Its subject, the apparent failure of Western civilization which World War I seemed to demonstrate, set the tone of his poetry until 1930. Such poems as "Prufrock" and "Gerontion" had suggested the spiritual debility of the modern individual and his culture while in satirical counterpoint his Sweeney poems had symbolized the rising tide of anticultural infidelity and human baseness. It is likely that in his abundant use of literary reference in *The Waste Land* he was influenced by Pound, a close friend whose advice, as Eliot has declared, he followed strictly in cutting and concentrating the poem. *The Waste Land* is the acknowledged masterpiece of its sort. It also introduced a form—the orchestration of related themes in successive movements which he used again in "The Hollow Men" (1925), *Ash-Wednesday* (1930), and his later masterpieces *Four Quartets* (1936–1942; 1943).

*The Waste Land* appeared as a volume in New York and London in 1922, but it had been published earlier that year in *The Criterion*, an influential London literary quarterly which Eliot edited from 1923 through 1929. His second volume of criticism, *Homage to John Dryden* (1924) was much admired for its critical method. In 1925 Eliot became a member of the

board of the publishing firm now known as Faber and Faber, and he has been active in that association ever since. The first collection of his poems appeared as *Poems, 1909–1925* (1925). In 1927 he was confirmed in the Anglican Church and became a British subject.

A year later, in connection with the publication of the critical volume *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928), he described himself as "a royalist in politics, a classicist in literature, and an Anglo-Catholic in religion"; and he has manifested an increasing reliance upon authority and tradition. His later poetry took a positive turn toward faith in life, in strong contrast with the desperation of *The Waste Land*. This was demonstrated by *Ash-Wednesday*, a poem of mystical conflict between faith and doubt, beautiful in its language if difficult in its symbolism. In 1932, in *Sweeney Agonistes*, he brought Sweeney to a deserved and gruesome death in a strange play that fascinates the attention by mingling penitence with musical comedy. In "The Hollow Men" he satirized the straw men, the Guy Fawkes men, whose world would end "not with a bang, but a whimper"; also in this period he produced the "Ariel Poems," including the exquisite and tender "Marina" (1930). *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), a poetic tragedy on the betrayal of Thomas à Becket, has been successfully performed, and is a drama of impressive spiritual power. His *Collected Poems, 1909–1935* (1936), and the collected *Essays, Ancient and Mod-*

ern, which in the same year gave perspective to his criticism, brought to an end this first period of spiritual exploration.

Eliot's next major accomplishment, the *Four Quartets*, originated during his visit to the United States (1932-1934), his first return to his native country in seventeen years. During this period he wrote the small "Landscapes," some of them drawn from American scenes, which are spiritually connected with the theme of the *Quartets*. His lectures at Harvard University in 1932 resulted in the influential volume *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933). In 1934 he lectured at the University of Virginia, and produced the study of orthodoxy and faith entitled *After Strange Gods, A Primer of Modern Heresy*. Presumably it was during this year that he conceived the subject of "Burnt Norton," the first of the *Quartets*.

The four poems that eventually resulted provide a reasoned philosophical discussion of the foundations of Christian faith, involving the nature of time, the significance of history, the religious psychology of man, and the nature of his experience; most importantly, perhaps, they attempt, by means of lofty poetic feeling and metaphysical insight, to suggest the actuality and meaning of such Christian mysteries as Incarnation and Pentecost. To some readers, these poems have seemed deficient in breadth, based as they are upon an authoritarian tradition of Christian philosophy; but they have been of unusual interest for an age desperately

seeking to resolve the conflict between spiritual and material reality. In 1943, the four poems, which had all been previously published, were brought together in one volume.

Eliot dramatized domestic life in terms of his philosophy. *The Family Reunion* (1939) was not generally considered successful as drama. *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), and *The Elder Statesman* (1958) created interest as experimental theater.

Few men of letters have been more fully honored in their own day than T. S. Eliot, and even those who strongly disagree with him seemed content with his selection for the Nobel Prize in 1948. *The Complete Poems and Plays* (1952) is a relatively small volume, but it represents an artist whose ideas are large, whose craftsmanship is the expression of artistic responsibility, and whose poems represent the progressive refinement and illustration of his aesthetics.

*The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, 1952, contains in one volume everything of importance except *The Confidential Clerk*, 1954, and *The Elder Statesman*, 1958. This supersedes the long-standard *Collected Poems, 1909-1935*, 1936. Eliot's major volumes of poetry and criticism are mentioned in the note above. No comprehensive edition of his essays has been prepared; the principal collections are *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*, 1932; *Essays, Ancient and Modern*, 1936; *Selected Essays*, new edition, 1950; *Essays on Elizabethan Drama*, 1956; *On Poetry and Poets*, 1957. Recent volumes of critical importance are *The Idea of a Christian Society*, 1940; *The Music of Poetry*, 1942; *Notes toward the Definition of Culture*, 1948; *The Three Voices of Poetry*, 1953; and *The Frontiers of Criticism*, 1956.

F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*, third edition, 1958, is still

the best introduction. T. S. Eliot: *A Selected Critique*, edited by Leonard Unger, 1948, is a well-selected collection of major essays interpreting Eliot; and see Leonard Unger's *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, 1949. Other useful studies are in George Williamson, *The Talent of T. S. Eliot*, 1929; Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle*, 1931; F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*, 1932; R. P. Blackmur, *The Double Agent*, 1935;

Allen Tate, *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas*, 1936; Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, 1930; Clive Sansom, *The Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, 1947; Elizabeth A. Drew, *T. S. Eliot: the Design of His Poetry*, 1949; George Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot*, 1953; Grover Smith, Jr., *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, 1956; and Hugh Kenner, *Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot*, 1959.

## Tradition and the Individual Talent<sup>1</sup>

### I

In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence. We cannot refer to 'the tradition' or to 'a tradition'; at most, we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of So-and-so is 'traditional' or even 'too traditional.' Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure. If otherwise, it is vaguely approbative, with the implication, as to the work approved, of some pleasing archæological reconstruction. You can hardly make the word agreeable to English ears without this comfortable reference to the reassuring science of archæology.

Certainly the word is not likely to appear in our appreciations of living or dead writers. Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius. We know, or think we know, from the enormous mass of critical writing that has appeared in the French language, the critical method or habit of the French; we only conclude (we are such unconscious people) that the French are 'more critical' than we, and sometimes even plume ourselves a little with the fact, as if the French were the less spontaneous. Perhaps they are; but we might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism. One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this

1. Published early in his career, in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), this essay defines

a primary critical position from which Eliot's subsequent ideas have developed.

prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity.

Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not onesided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.

In a peculiar sense he will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. I say judged, not amputated, by them; not judged to be as good as, or worse or better than, the dead; and certainly not judged by the canons of dead critics. It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art. And we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value—a test, it is true, which can only be slowly and cautiously applied, for we are none of us infallible judges of conformity. We say: it appears to conform, and is perhaps individual, or it appears individual, and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other.

To proceed to a more intelligible exposition of the relation of the poet to the past: he can neither take the past as a lump, an indiscriminate bolus, nor can he form himself wholly on one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred period. The first course is inadmissible, the second is an important experience of youth, and the third is a pleasant and highly desirable supplement. The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen.<sup>2</sup> That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist or not to the extent which we imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery. But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.

Someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know.

I am alive to a usual objection to what is clearly part of my programme for the *métier*<sup>3</sup> of poetry. The objection is that the doctrine

2. In the rock shelters of La Madeleine (in southwest France) appear the first paleolithic cave drawings to be studied

by modern scholars. The animal sketches particularly show an advanced art.

3. Craft; i.e., art.

requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry), a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon. It will even be affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts poetic sensibility. While, however, we persist in believing that a poet ought to know as much as will not encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to whatever can be put into a useful shape for examinations, drawing-rooms, or the still more pretentious modes of publicity. Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I therefore invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.<sup>4</sup>

## II

Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the *susurrus*<sup>5</sup> of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of 'personality,' not being necessarily more interesting, or having 'more to say,' but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of plati-

4. As a catalyst; see the second paragraph below.

5. Latin for "murmuring."



num, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.<sup>6</sup>

The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely. Canto XV of the *Inferno* (Brunetto Latini)<sup>7</sup> is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation; but the effect, though single as that of any work of art, is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which 'came,' which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to.<sup>8</sup> The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.

If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness,' the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts. The episode of Paolo and Francesca employs a definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of.<sup>9</sup> It is no more intense, furthermore, than Canto

6. The concept of the poem itself as the sole object of the reader's attention has become a principal tenet of recent criticism.

7. In this canto, Dante records his meeting in Hell with the Florentine philosopher Brunetto Latini (1212?-1294?).

8. Brunetto, condemned, for "unnatural lust," never to "stop one instant," walks with Dante in grave discourse; then must dash "like a racer" to regain his

sordid companions, thus providing Eliot's catalysis of "feeling" with the "emotional image."

9. The lovers Paolo and Francesca, immortalized in Canto v of Dante's *Inferno*, had been slain by Francesca's jealous husband. Eliot distinguishes between the emotion of the lovers and Dante's fusion of various emotions in his narrative.

XXVI, the voyage of Ulysses,<sup>1</sup> which has not the direct dependence upon an emotion. Great variety is possible in the process of transmutation of emotion: the murder of Agamemnon,<sup>2</sup> or the agony of Othello, gives an artistic effect apparently closer to a possible original than the scenes from Dante. In the *Agamemnon*, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator; in *Othello* to the emotion of the protagonist himself. But the difference between art and the event is always absolute; the combination which is the murder of Agamemnon is probably as complex as that which is the voyage of Ulysses. In either case there has been a fusion of elements. The ode of Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the nightingale, partly perhaps because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together.

The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.

I will quote a passage<sup>3</sup> which is unfamiliar enough to be regarded with fresh attention in the light—or darkness—of these observations:

And now methinks I could e'en chide myself  
 For doating on her beauty, though her death  
 Shall be revenged after no common action.  
 Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours  
 For thee? For thee does she undo herself?  
 Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships  
 For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute?  
 Why does yon fellow falsify highways,  
 And put his life between the judge's lips,  
 To refine such a thing—keeps horse and men  
 To beat their valours for her? . . .

In this passage (as is evident if it is taken in its context) there is a combination of positive and negative emotions: an intensely strong attraction toward beauty and an equally intense fascination by the

1. Ulysses' straightforward account (in Dante's *Inferno*, xxvi) of his last voyage into the unknown sea, and his death by shipwreck, does not agree with Homer's *Odyssey*, and is thought to be Dante's invention.

2. In the *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus.

Eliot refers to the murder of Agamemnon by his wife's lover in the closing lines of "Sweeney among the Nightingales."

3. Act III, Scene 5, ll. 71-82, of *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607), by Cyril Tourneur (ca. 1575-1626).

The word within a word,<sup>5</sup> unable to speak a word,  
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year  
Came Christ the tiger<sup>6</sup>

20

In depraved May,<sup>7</sup> dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,  
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk  
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero  
With caressing hands, at Limoges  
Who walked all night in the next room;

25

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;  
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room  
Shifting the candles; Fräulein von Kulp  
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant shuttles  
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,  
An old man in a draughty house  
Under a windy knob.

30

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or if still believed,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon  
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with  
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think  
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices  
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues  
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.  
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.<sup>8</sup>

35

40

45

5. See John i: 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." For "Swaddled with darkness," in the next line, see Luke ii: 12, "Ye shall find the babe [Jesus] wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger"; see also Job xxxviii: 2, 9. The theme of the lost primordial Word recurs in *Ash-Wednesday*, *The Waste Land*, and "Burnt Norton."  
6. "Christ the tiger" suggests the biblical language of prophecy. In Revelation v: 5, Christ is called "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." The latter was that son of whom Jacob, in blessing, declared "Judah is a lion's whelp"; he further prophesied that Judah's descendants should inherit this power "until Shiloh [the Messiah] come" (Genesis xlix: 9-10). Finally, Eliot's "Christ the tiger" and the two following lines sug-

gest the Eucharist—the transubstantiation of the bread and wine of the Sacrament into the body and blood of Christ—and remind us that Samson, finding "honey in the carcase of the lion," propounded the prophetic riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat \* \* \*" (*cf.* Judges xiv: 8-14).

7. *Cf.* *The Waste Land*, ll. 1-2: "April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land." In the present passage (ll. 19-29), the offense of spring is identified with the betrayal of Christ (*cf.* "flowering judas," and Matthew xxvi: 14-16, 47-49). The poet has invented the names of the persons in this passage who desecrate the Eucharist by their furtive acts.

8. The tree of the Garden of Eden; see Genesis ii: 16-17, and iii: 1-19.

## 1430 · Thomas Stearns Eliot

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours.<sup>9</sup> Think at last  
We have not reached conclusion, when I  
Stiffen in a rented house.<sup>1</sup> Think at last  
I have not made this show purposelessly  
And it is not by any concitation<sup>2</sup>  
Of the backward devils.

50

I would meet you upon this honestly.  
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom  
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.<sup>3</sup>  
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it  
Since what is kept must be adulterated?  
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:  
How should I use it for your closer contact?

55

60

These with a thousand small deliberations  
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,  
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,  
With pungent sauces, multiply variety  
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,  
Suspend its operations, will the weevil  
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel,<sup>4</sup> whirled  
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear  
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits  
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,  
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,  
And an old man driven by the Trades  
To a sleepy corner.

65

70

Tenants of the house,  
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

75

1920

## Sweeney Erect

*And the trees about me,  
Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks  
Groan with continual surges; and behind me  
Make all a desolation. Look, look, wenches!*<sup>5</sup>

9. Cf. ll. 20–23. There the “tiger” was the bread and wine of the Eucharist; now He is the avenger of the Judgment.

1. Cf. l. 7 and l. 74; the “house” is Gerontion’s body.

2. Concerted action, excitement.

3. See the reference to “the woman,” ll. 13–14.

4. Unidentified persons, all to be “whirled / Beyond \* \* \* the shuddering Bear” (l. 68), hence beyond the polestar, the northernmost star in the two constellations of the Bear. The idea is elaborated in the succeeding lines—Belle Isle Straits are far north, between

Labrador and Newfoundland; the Horn is the southern tip of South America.

5. *The Maid’s Tragedy*, Act II. Scene 2, ll. 74–77, by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, late Elizabethan dramatists. In the play, Queen Aspatia, forsaken by her lover, asks her maid to weave her picture into a tapestry in the character of Ariadne. In the words here quoted she is describing the appropriate scenery for the tapestry. Eliot continues this description, and the traditional Ariadne story, in his first two stanzas.

Paint me a cavernous waste shore  
 Cast in the unstilled Cyclades,<sup>6</sup>  
 Paint me the bold anfractuons rocks  
 Faced by the snarled and yelping seas.

Display me Acolus<sup>7</sup> above 5  
 Reviewing the insurgent gales  
 Which tangle Ariadne's hair  
 And swell with haste the perjured sails.

Morning stirs the feet and hands  
 (Nausicaa and Polypheme),<sup>8</sup> 10  
 Gesture of orang-outang  
 Rises from the sheets in steam.

This withered root of knots of hair  
 Slitted below and gashed with eyes,  
 This oval O cropped out with teeth: 15  
 The sickle motion from the thighs

Jackknives upward at the knees  
 Then straightens out from heel to hip  
 Pushing the framework of the bed  
 And clawing at the pillow slip. 20

Sweeney<sup>9</sup> addressed full length to shave  
 Broadbottomed, pink from nape to base,  
 Knows the female temperament  
 And wipes the suds around his face.

(The lengthened shadow of a man 25  
 Is history, said Emerson<sup>1</sup>

6. Cf. Catullus, *Carminc*, LXIV. Ariadne saved the life of Theseus, who then accepted her love. He later deserted her on a wild coast in the Cyclades, and sailed for home. Ariadne's plight aroused Jupiter, who prevented Theseus from changing his sails from black to white—his signal to his father, King Aegeus, that he had survived. The stricken father killed himself on seeing the black sails afar off. (See "perjured sails," l. 8).

7. Ruler of the winds in classic myth.

8. See Homer, *Odyssey*, Books VIII and IX. Nausicaä was princess of Phaeacia; she rescued and befriended the shipwrecked Ulysses, loved him hopelessly, and sent him on his way in a ship supplied by her father. By contrast, Polyphemus was a one-eyed, man-eating giant, master of the Cyclops, whom Ulysses escaped by burning out his eye. In other legends, this grotesque Caliban lusted after a horrified water di-

vinity, the beautiful Galatea (Theocritus, *Idylls*, VI, XI; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XIII).

9. The character of Sweeney appears in several of Eliot's poems, always associated with the degradation and vulgarization of life. See also "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service," "Sweeney among the Nightingales," and *The Waste Land*, l. 198. In *Sweeney Agonistes* (1932), an "unfinished" drama, he meets his predestined death as a murderer. In the present poem, the "orang-outang" of l. 11 recalls the phrase "Ape-neck Sweeney" in "Sweeney among the Nightingales." The title, "Sweeney Erect," suggests *Pithecanthropus erectus* (literally, "ape-man erect"), the fossil Java Man, earlier than *Homo sapiens*.

1. Cf. "Self-Reliance," paragraph 17: "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man \* \* \* and all history re-

Who had not seen the silhouette  
Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.)

Tests the razor on his leg  
Waiting until the shriek subsides. 30  
The epileptic on the bed  
Curves backward, clutching at her sides.

The ladies of the corridor  
Find themselves involved, disgraced,  
Call witness to their principles 35  
And deprecate the lack of taste

Observing that hysteria  
Might easily be misunderstood;  
Mrs. Turner intimates  
It does the house no sort of good. 40

But Doris,<sup>2</sup> towelled from the bath,  
Enters padding on broad feet,  
Bringing sal volatile  
And a glass of brandy neat.

1920

### A Cooking Egg<sup>3</sup>

*En l'an trentiesme de mon aage,  
Que toutes mes hontes j'ay beues . . .*<sup>4</sup>

Pipit sate upright in her chair  
Some distance from where I was sitting;  
Views of the Oxford Colleges  
Lay on the table, with the knitting.

Daguerreotypes and silhouettes, 5  
Her grandfather and great great aunts,  
Supported on the mantelpiece  
An Invitation to the Dance.<sup>5</sup>

solves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons."

2. In *Sweeney Agonistes* Doris reappears in the same rôle. Sweeney offers to take her "to a cannibal isle" where there is only "birth, copulation, and death." Doris replies, "I'd be bored."

3. An egg for use in cooking only, as compared with one "strictly fresh"; its age is against it.

4. "In the thirtieth year of my life, /

How I have drunken deep of all my shames . . ." (*Le Grand Testament*, 1461, François Villon, ll. 1-2). Reference to this climacteric of Villon's became a melancholy cliché among the poets of Eliot's generation.

5. This now-forgotten picture, along with books of *Views* (l. 3) and the family photographs, was once a conventional part of a somewhat prim domestic *décor*.

I shall not want Honour in Heaven  
 For I shall meet Sir Philip Sidney<sup>6</sup> 10  
 And have talk with Coriolanus<sup>7</sup>  
 And other heroes of that kidney.<sup>8</sup>

I shall not want Capital in Heaven  
 For I shall meet Sir Alfred Mond.<sup>9</sup>  
 We two shall lie together, lapt 15  
 In a five per cent. Exchequer Bond.

I shall not want Society in Heaven,  
 Lucretia Borgia shall be my Bride;  
 Her anecdotes will be more amusing  
 Than Pipit's experience could provide. 20

I shall not want Pipit in Heaven:  
 Madame Blavatsky<sup>1</sup> will instruct me  
 In the Seven Sacred Trances;  
 Piccarda de Donati<sup>2</sup> will conduct me.  
 . . . . .

But where is the penny world I bought 25  
 To eat with Pipit behind the screen?  
 The red-eyed scavengers are creeping  
 From Kentish Town and Golder's Green;<sup>3</sup>

Where are the eagles and the trumpets?  
 Buried beneath some snow-deep Alps. 30  
 Over buttered scones and crumpets  
 Weeping, weeping multitudes  
 Droop in a hundred A.B.C.'s.<sup>4</sup>

1920

6. Gallant Elizabethan gentleman and good poet, of irreproachable family connections, Sir Philip Sidney chose for the "mistress" of his sonnets the daughter of an earl.

7. A legendary Roman patrician leader. Cf. *The Waste Land*, l. 417, and Eliot's later "Coriolan" poems.

8. Cf. Plato, *Apology*, 41: "I myself, too, shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and any other ancient hero who has suffered death through an unjust judgment \* \* \*"

9. Sir Alfred Mond (died 1930) was a famous British financier and industrialist.

1. Elena Petrovna Blavatsky (died 1891), an internationally famous writer

on the occult, worker of "miracles," and founder of the Theosophical Society.

2. See Dante, *Purgatorio*, xxiv, 10-15. In *Purgatory*, Dante inquires about the immortal destiny of Piccarda, who like his own wife was of the great Donati family. She was both "beautiful and good," and already "wears her glad crown" in Paradise. Cf. *Paradiso*, III, ll. 35 ff.

3. The "penny world" of innocence (l. 25) is compared with "Kentish Town" and "Golder's Green" of suburban London, then the habitats of upstart ambition.

4. The Aerated Bread Corporation, a chain of restaurants called the "A.B.C.'s," where "scones and crumpets," popular British pastries, are consumed in the ritual of afternoon tea.

Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service<sup>5</sup>

*Look, look, master, here comes two religious caterpillars.*  
—THE JEW OF MALTA

Polyphiloprogenitive<sup>6</sup>

The sapient sutlers<sup>7</sup> of the Lord

Drift across the window-panes.

In the beginning was the Word.<sup>8</sup>

In the beginning was the Word.

Superfetation of τὸ εἶν,<sup>9</sup>

And at the mensual<sup>1</sup> turn of time

Produced enervate Origen.<sup>2</sup>

A painter of the Umbrian school

Designed upon a gesso ground

The nimbus of the Baptized God.<sup>3</sup>

The wilderness is cracked and browned

But through the water pale and thin

Still shine the unoffending feet

And there above the painter set

The Father and the Paraclete.<sup>4</sup>

The sable presbyters<sup>5a</sup> approach

The avenue of penitence;

5. The epigraph to this poem is from Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Act IV, Scene I, l. 21. The play attacks the corruption and carnality of the clergy. This idea is reflected at once in the extraordinary first line of the poem. Subsequent stanzas explore the relationship of the fertility impulse to sexual conduct, nature, and God; and its rôle in philosophy, religion, and ritual. The speculation ends only in confusion, in the amusing last stanza, which confirms the suggestion that this meditation occurred in a bathtub beside a garden window, and shows "Sweeney" as part of everyone's nature (cf. "Sweeney Erect").

6. Cf. "philoprogenitive," designating a person possessed with desire for offspring. The masterful prefix "poly" adds the idea of promiscuity.

7. From the Early Dutch *soeteler*, "one who undertakes a humble employment." Cf. ll. 25-28. In modern parlance, the sutler is one who follows an army, selling provisions, liquor, and so on to the soldiers.

8. John i: 1. Cf. "Gerontion," l. 18, and observe the shift here from "Word" as spirit to "Word" as fertility (ll. 5 and 6 of this poem).

9. The Greek phrase, literally "the One," in Greek metaphysics came to

mean "the unity of Being." Hence, in ll. 5 and 6, "the Word" implies a "superfetation"—sublime and universal pregnancy—within "being," or the Godhead.

1. A crossbred word of Eliot's coinage. Cf. "mensal," and "menstrual."

2. Origen (died ca. 254 A.D.), a Father of the Greek Church, was the first to establish a synthesis of Hebrew Scripture and Greek philosophy. Although his doctrines were later declared heretical, Eliot's adjective "enervate" refers rather to Origen's literal application of Matthew xix: 12, " \* \* \* there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

3. At the baptism of Jesus in the wilderness by John the Baptist (cf. Matthew iii: 11-17), "the heavens were opened," but the "nimbus of the Baptized God" also suggests the pagan divinities in certain Eastern legends. Since the painting is on "gesso" (plaster), the "wilderness is cracked." The phrase "unoffending feet" (l. 14) recalls that when later Jesus was crucified, his feet were nailed to the cross.

4. Specifically, the Holy Spirit, which descended "like a dove" at the baptism (cf. Matthew iii: 16, Mark i: 10, Luke iii: 22, and John i: 32).

5a. Presbyters were Elders of the early



## Winter Is Another Country · 1471

The unshared and single man must cover his  
Loneliness as a girl her shame for the way of  
Life is neither by one man nor by suffering. 25

Who are the born brothers in truth? The puddlers  
Scorched by the same flame in the same foundries:  
Those who have spit on the same boards with the blood in it: 30

Ridden the same rivers with green logs:  
Fought the police in the parks of the same cities:  
Grinned for the same blows: the same flogging:

Veterans out of the same ships—factories—  
Expeditions for fame: the founders of continents: 35  
Those that hid in Geneva<sup>1</sup> a time back:

Those that have hidden and hunted and all such—  
Fought together: labored together: they carry the  
Common look like a card and they pass touching.

Brotherhood! No word said can make you brothers! 40  
Brotherhood only the brave earn and by danger or  
Harm or by bearing hurt and by no other.

Brotherhood here in the strange world is the rich and  
Rarest giving of life and the most valued:  
Not to be had for a word or a week's wishing. 45

1936

## Winter Is Another Country

If the autumn would  
End! If the sweet season,  
The late light in the tall trees would  
End! If the fragrance, the odor of  
Fallen apples, dust on the road, 5  
Water somewhere near, the scent of  
Water touching me; if this would end  
I could endure the absence in the night,  
The hands beyond the reach of hands, the name  
Called out and never answered with my name: 10  
The image seen but never seen with sight.  
I could endure this all  
If autumn ended and the cold light came.

1948

1. Geneva has long been a place of refuge for those persecuted for matters of conscience and for liberal leaders.

## HART CRANE

(1899-1932)

The thirty-three years of Hart Crane's dark and troubled life were not sufficient to develop the genius that was in him, but when he put an end to his life he left a small collection of lyric masterpieces and an American epic of major stature, *The Bridge*. His emotional disintegration resulted from psychological disturbances probably personal in origin rather than reflections of the spiritual disillusionment which prevailed among the literary generation of the first World War. He was only fifteen when the war began in Europe; and when he planned *The Bridge*, it was with the expressed determination to celebrate the unbroken stream of humanistic idealism that he saw in the American historical experience, in contrast with Eliot's obituary for Western culture in *The Waste Land*.

Harold Hart Crane was born on July 21, 1899, in Garrettsville, Ohio, but spent his boyhood in Cleveland. There his father prospered as a manufacturer of candies, and was determined to prepare the youth for a business career. Young Crane, who had begun writing poetry as a boy, and first published at fifteen, was equally determined to become a writer. He was emotionally disturbed by this breach with his father; soon a separation between his parents subjected him, as he said, to "the curse of sundered parenthood." At sixteen he refreshed childhood memo-

ries of Caribbean waters by visiting his mother at Isle of Pines, Cuba, where her relatives had sugar plantations. Like Gauguin, Crane was influenced emotionally by the tropics, which lent an exotic flavor to his work. On an early trip abroad he formed a deep attachment for Paris; later he was fascinated by New York, where he made long visits with relatives.

Soon Crane struck out for himself, and worked in various places as mechanic, clerk, salesman, and reporter. By 1922 he was settled in New York, living from hand to mouth, sporadically employed as a writer of advertising copy. He studied other writers—T. S. Eliot, Donne and the Elizabethans, and modern continental novelists. Occasionally he was able to publish a poem or two and these won him literary friends, notably Margaret Anderson and the New York coterie then writing for her *Little Review*. His first volume, *White Buildings* (1926), established his reputation as a poet's poet—not the same thing as winning an audience. He wrote slowly, a perfectionist painfully conscious of his relative lack of formal preparation for his task.

He was also spending much of his energy in developing the American materials and myth for *The Bridge*. Waldo Frank reports that the idea of taking Brooklyn Bridge as his basic symbol was suggested by the accident of his residence on Brook-

lyn Heights, in a mean room which nevertheless commanded a view of the great span from land to land, with the tides of humanity water-borne beneath it and flowing across it in ceaseless traffic. This conception of unity in diversity has obvious connections with American myth, and it occurs so often in Crane's lyrics as to suggest that it had in addition a private emotional significance for him. The sea and the city also persist as symbols of unity—the sea, which merges the individual identity in the universal solution; the city, an aggregate of individuals coming together in meaningful relationships. With these, in *The Bridge*, he associated the stream of history and the stream of time.

The benevolence of Otto Kalm enabled him to complete *The Bridge* in 1930, when it won the annual award of *Poetry* and recognition as a unique achievement. The plan of the poem is simple: in a succession of cantos we follow the westward thrust of the bridge—our history and time-stream—into the body of America, the body of Pocahontas, twin symbol with the bridge of “the flesh our feet have moved upon.” “Powhatan's Daughter,” the second poem, establishes the fertility myth; and a poem of Pocahontas, printed as a marginal gloss throughout the epic, is an idea in counterpoint to each successive theme. In “Van Winkle” (see below) Pocahontas “like Memory \* \* \* is time's truant” among the

shades of our history and its myth. In the fourth canto, “The River” (see below), Pocahontas merges with “the din and slogans” of modern America, and takes us backward through time, down the rails, trails, and rivers to the first explorers and their legends. In the fifth canto, a wild and beautiful Indian dance-phantasy, the continental nature myth emerges, and the final canto of this sequence, “Indiana,” is the idyl of the settled land of homes, farms, town, and families. *The Bridge* acknowledges Man the creator, generic, anonymous, and, in the American experience, master of a wild continent and architect of its dream.

In 1931, Crane was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship to be used in Mexico, where he proposed to write a long poem employing Mexican history. Failing to accomplish his object, and apparently suffering from the obsession that by the irregularities of his personal life he had squandered his power as an artist, on April 27, 1932, he disappeared into the sea from the stern of the vessel on which he was returning to New York.

Hart Crane's *Collected Poems*, edited, with an indispensable introduction, by Waldo Frank, appeared in 1933. For biography and criticism see Brom Weber, ed., *The Letters of Hart Crane*, 1952; Philip Horton, *Hart Crane* \* \* \*, 1937, 1957; and Brom Weber, *Hart Crane*, 1948. Among standard critical works see especially R. P. Blackmur, *The Double Agent*, 1935; and Allen Tate, *Reactionary Essays*, 1936. H. D. Howe compiled *Hart Crane: A Bibliography*, 1955.

## From The Bridge

## Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest  
 The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him,  
 Shedding white rings of tumult, building high  
 Over the chained bay waters Liberty—

Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes 5  
 As apparitional as sails that cross  
 Some page of figures to be filed away;  
 —Till elevators drop us from our day . . .

I think of cinemas,<sup>1</sup> panoramic sleights  
 With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene 10  
 Never disclosed, but hastened to again,  
 Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;

And Thee,<sup>2</sup> across the harbor, silver-paced  
 As though the sun took step of thee, yet left  
 Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,— 15  
 Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft  
 A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets.  
 Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,<sup>3</sup>  
 A jest falls from the speechless caravan. 20

Down Wall, from girder into street noon leaks,  
 A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene;<sup>4</sup>  
 All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn . . .  
 Thy cables breathe the North Atlantic still.

And obscure as that heaven of the Jews, 25  
 Thy guerdon . . . Accolade thou dost bestow  
 Of anonymity time cannot raise:  
 Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show.

O harp and altar, of the fury fused,  
 (How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!) 30  
 Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,  
 Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,—

Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift  
 Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,

1. The prevailing term in Europe for "motion pictures"; but here note that the Greek word signifies "motion."

2. Brooklyn Bridge.

3. Some notoriety seekers (e.g., Steve Brody) and many suicides have plunged

from Brooklyn Bridge.

4. The fuel used to produce the white heat of the torches employed to cut and weld hard metals. Wall Street (cf. l. 21), near the bridge, was then visible from its summit.

Beading thy path—condense eternity: 35  
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;  
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.  
The City's fiery parcels all undone,  
Already snow submerges an iron year . . . 46

O Sleepless as the river under thee,  
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,  
Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend  
And of the curvship lend a myth to God.

\* \* \*

Van Winkle

Macadam, gun-gray as the tunny's<sup>5</sup> belt,  
Leaps from Far Rockaway<sup>6</sup> to Golden Gate:  
Listen! the miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds—  
Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds.

Times earlier, when you hurried off to school, 3  
—It is the same hour though a later day—  
You walked with Pizarro in a copybook,  
And Cortes rode up, reining tautly in—  
Firmly as coffee grips the taste,—and away!

There was Priscilla's<sup>7</sup> cheek close in the wind, 36  
And Captain Smith, all beard and certainty,  
And Rip Van Winkle, bowing by the way,—  
“Is this Sleepy Hollow, friend—?” And he—

And Rip forgot the office hours,  
and he forgot the pay; 35

Van Winkle sweeps a tenement  
down town on Avenue A,—

The grind-organ says . . . Remember, remember  
The cinder pile at the end of the backyard  
Where we stoned the family of young 26  
Garter snakes under . . . And the monoplanes  
We launched—with paper wings and twisted  
Rubber bands. . . . Recall—recall

the rapid tongues  
That flittered from under the ash heap day 25

5. Any fish of the tuna family.

6. Far Rockaway is on the Atlantic coast of Long Island; “to Golden Gate,” therefore, would be the span of the continent from the Atlantic to the

Pacific.

7. Priscilla Alden, made familiar to those who “hurried off to school” by Longfellow's poem *The Courtship of Miles Standish*.

After day whenever your stick discovered  
 Some sunning inch of unsuspecting fiber—  
 It flashed back at your thrust, as clean as fire.

*And Rip was slowly made aware  
                   that he, Van Winkle, was not here* 30  
*Nor there. He woke and swore he'd seen Broadway  
                   a Catskill daisy chain in May—*

So memory, that strikes a rhyme out of a box,  
 Or splits a random smell of flowers through glass—  
 Is it the whip stripped from the lilac tree 35  
 One day in spring my father took to me,  
 Or is it the Sabbatical, unconscious smile  
 My mother almost brought me once from church  
 And once only, as I recall—?

It flickered through the snow screen, blindly 40  
 It forsook her at the doorway; it was gone  
 Before I had left the window. It  
 Did not return with the kiss in the hall.

Macadam, gun-gray as the tunny's belt,  
 Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate . . . 45  
 Keep hold of that nickel for car-change, Rip,—  
 Have you got your paper—?  
 And hurry along, Van Winkle—it's getting late!

### *The River*

Stick your patent name on a signboard\*  
 brother—all over—going west—young man  
 Tintex—Japalac—Certain-teed Overalls ads  
 and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped  
 in the guaranteed corner—see Bert Williams<sup>9</sup> what? 5  
 Minstrels when you steal a chicken just  
 save me the wing, for if it isn't  
 Eric it ain't for miles around a  
 Mazda—and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas  
 a Ediford—and whistling down the tracks 10  
 a headlight rushing with the sound—can you  
 imagine—while an EXPRESS makes time like

8. In ll. 1–20 of this section the poet creates an impression of materialistic confusion by the free association of the slogans, events, and advertising of the period: among others "Japalac," a varnish; the Erie Railroad; the combination of Edison and Ford (Ediford); and the Twentieth Century Limited.

Compare the similar devices used by Dos Passos in *U.S.A.*, the first part of which appeared at about the same time as this poem.

9. One of the most talented Negro comedians of this century; flourished from about 1895 until his death in 1922.

SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST  
 RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE  
 WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR 15  
 WIRES OR EVEN RUNNING brooks<sup>1</sup> connecting ears  
 and no more sermons windows flashing roar  
 Breathtaking—as you like it . . . eh?

So the 20th Century—so  
 whizzed the Limited—roared by and left 20  
 three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly  
 watching the tail lights wizen and converge,  
 slipping gimleted and neatly out of sight.  
 The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas,  
 Loped under wires that span the mountain stream. 25  
 Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision  
 Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream.  
 But some men take their liquor slow—and count—  
 Though they'll confess no rosary nor clue—  
 The river's minute by the far brook's year. 30  
 Under a world of whistles, wires and steam  
 Caboose-like they go ruminating through  
 Ohio, Indiana—blind baggage—  
 To Cheyenne tagging . . . Maybe Kalamazoo.

Time's renderings, time's blendings they construe 35  
 As final reckonings of fire and snow;  
 Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist  
 Of unvalled winds they offer, singing low  
 My Old Kentucky Home and Casey Jones,  
 Some Sunny Day. I heard a road-gang chanting so. 40  
 And afterwards, who had a colt's eyes—one said,  
 "Jesus! Oh I remember watermelon days!" And sped  
 High in a cloud of merriment, recalled  
 "—And when my Aunt Sally Simpson smiled," he drawled—  
 "It was almost Louisiana, long ago." 45

"There's no place like Booneville though, Buddy,"  
 One said, excising a last burr from his vest,  
 "—For early troutng." Then peering in the can,  
 "—But I kept on the tracks." Possessed, resigned,  
 He trod the fire down pensively and grinned, 50  
 Spreading dry shingles of a beard. . . .

Behind  
 My father's cannery works I used to see  
 Rail-squatters ranged in nomad rallery,

1. Cf. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 1, ll. 16-17: "books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones," and so on.

The ancient men—wifeless or runaway 55  
 Hobo-trekkers that forever search  
 An empire wilderness of freight and rails.  
 Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,  
 Holding to childhood like some termless play.  
 John, Jake, or Charley, hopping the slow freight 60  
 —Memphis to Tallahassee—riding the rods,  
 Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.

Yet they touch something like a key perhaps.  
 From pole to pole across the hills, the states  
 —They know a body under the wide rain; 65  
 Youngsters with eyes like fjords, old reprobates  
 With racetrack jargon,—dotting immensity  
 They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast  
 Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue,  
 Is past the valley-sleepers, south or west. 70  
 —As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too.

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame  
 (O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)  
 I have dreamed beyond the print that bound her name.  
 Trains sounding the long blizzards out—I heard 75  
 Wail into distances I knew were hers.  
 Papooses crying on the wind's long mane  
 Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,  
 —Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,  
 Time like a serpent down her shoulder dark, 80  
 And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,  
 The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools  
 Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain  
 And re-descend with corn from querulous crows. 85  
 Such pilferings make up their timeless catage,  
 Propitiate them for their timber torn  
 By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage!  
 They doze now, below axe and powder horn.

And Pullman breakfasters glide glistening steel 90  
 From tunnel into field—iron strides the dew—  
 Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel.  
 You have a half-hour's wait at Siskiyou,  
 Or stay the night and take the next train through.  
 Southward, near Cairo passing, you can see 95  
 The Ohio merging,—borne down Tennessee;  
 And if it's summer and the sun's in dusk



Maybe the breeze will lift the River's musk  
 —As though the waters breathed that you might know  
*Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe.*<sup>2</sup> 100  
 Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down,  
 As though you touched hands with some ancient clown,  
 —A little while gaze absently below  
 And hum *Deep River* with them while they go.

Yes, turn again and sniff once more—look sec, 105  
 O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority—  
 Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,  
 For you, too, feed the River timelessly.  
 And few evade full measure of their fate;  
 Always they smile out cerily what they seem. 110  
 I could believe he joked at heaven's gate—  
 Dan Midland<sup>3</sup>—jolted from the cold brake-beam.

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,  
 Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—  
 They win no frontier by their wayward plight, 115  
 But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow.

You will not hear it as the sea; even stone  
 Is not more hushed by gravity . . . But slow,  
 As loth to take more tribute—sliding prone  
 Like one whose eyes were buried long ago 120

The River, spreading, flows—and spends your dream.  
 What are you, lost within this tideless spell?  
 You are your father's father, and the stream—  
 A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.

Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days— 125  
 Nights turbid, vascular with silted shale  
 And roots surrendered down of moraine clays:  
 The Mississippi drinks the farthest dale.

O quarrying passion, undertowed sunlight!  
 The basalt surface drags a jungle grace 130  
 Ochreous and lynx-barred in lengthening might;  
 Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!

Over De Soto's bones the freighted floors  
 Throb past the City storied of three thrones.<sup>4</sup>

2. Old Mississippi folk songs. "Deep River" (l. 104), a magnificent Negro spiritual, is also a Mississippi River song.

3. A storied hobo who fell from the brake beam while "riding the rods."

4. To prevent hostile Indians from dis-

covering the death of Hernando DeSoto, his men buried him in the waters of the Mississippi, near the later site of New Orleans, whose history involved the "three thrones" of Spain, France, and England.

Down two more turns the Mississippi pours 135  
 (Anon tall ironsidcs up from salt lagoons)

And flows within itself, heaps itself free.  
 All fades but one thin skyline 'round . . . Ahead  
 No embrace opens but the stinging sea;  
 The River lifts itself from its long bed, 140

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow,  
 Tortured with history, its one will—flow!  
 —The Passion spreads in wide tongues, chocked and slow,  
 Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.<sup>5</sup>

1930

## Voyages: II

—And yet this great wink of eternity,  
 Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings,  
 Samite sheeted and processioned where  
 Her undinal vast belly moonward bends,<sup>6</sup>  
 Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love; 5

Take this Sea,<sup>7</sup> whose diapason knells  
 On scrolls of silver snowy sentences,  
 The sceptered terror of whose sessions rends  
 As her demeanors motion well or ill,  
 All but the pieties of lovers' hands. 10

And onward, as bells off San Salvador  
 Salute the crocus lusters of the stars,  
 In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—  
 Adagios<sup>8</sup> of islands, O my Prodigal,  
 Complete the dark confessions her veins spell. 15

Mark how her turning shoulders wind the hours,<sup>9</sup>  
 And hasten while her penniless rich palms  
 Pass superscription of bent foam and wave,—  
 Hasten, while they are true,—sleep, death, desire,  
 Close round one instant in one floating flower. 20

Bind us in time, O seasons clear, and awe.  
 O minstrel galleons of Carib fire,  
 Bequeath us to no earthly shore until

5. This canto, "The River," has identified the stream of men with that of history and with the history-haunted river; the leap of the Mississippi into the Gulf is a fundamental theme of *The Bridge* in its entirety.

6. The fact of the moon's influence on

the tides is combined here with the myth of Undine's yearning for a mortal lover.

7. The Caribbean.

8. In music and the dance, a slow, graceful movement.

9. The tides are a clock for simple people living close to the shore.

Is answered in the vortex of our grave  
The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise. 25

1926

## Royal Palm

Green rustlings, more-than-regal charities  
Drift coolly from that tower of whispered light.  
Amid the noontide's blazed asperities  
I watched the sun's most gracious anchorite<sup>1</sup>

Climb up as by communings, year on year 5  
Uncaten of the earth or aught earth holds,  
And the gray trunk, that's elephantine, rear  
Its frondings sighing in aetherial folds.

Forever fruitless, and beyond that yield  
Of sweat the jungle presses with hot love 10  
And tendril till our deathward breath is sealed—  
It grazes the horizons, launched above

Mortality—ascending emerald-bright,  
A fountain at salute, a crown in view—  
Unshackled, casual of its azured height, 15  
As though it soared suchwise through heaven too.

1933

1. The ideas of chastity and fruitlessness (implied in "anchorite") are identified with the regal aloofness of the royal palm.



# Fiction in Search of Reality

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KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

(1890-)

The reputation of Katherine Anne Porter in contemporary literature probably has no parallel. All her published fiction comprises but five short novels and three volumes of short stories. She has never had a popular following; yet nearly all discriminating readers are acquainted with her work, and she has exercised a considerable influence on many serious younger writers. Like Katherine Mansfield, whose inspiration she has recognized, she has attempted to achieve a style strictly objective without sacrificing sensitivity, and she has succeeded by such careful selection and combination of character, situation, and action that the resulting story is self-motivated, without the author's overt presence.

Miss Porter's preparation was long and careful. Although she had written stories almost from infancy, she did not satisfy her own standards sufficiently to attempt publication until she was thirty. She was born at Indian Creek, Texas, on May 15, 1890, and got her early education at various convent schools in Texas and Louisiana. In 1920 she went

to New York, where she made her home until 1937. During this period she also spent time in Europe and Mexico. She has written a study of the arts and crafts of the latter country, and she has published translations of Spanish, Latin-American, and French fiction. She was a newspaper reporter intermittently and later held an editorial post for a while.

After 1924 her stories began to appear both in standard literary magazines and in those of more experimental inclination. They were at once noticed, and when she collected only six of them in a limited edition, entitled *Flowering Judas* (1930), her reputation with the literary coterie was confirmed. The next year a Guggenheim Fellowship provided the opportunity for travel and writing in Europe.

Again in New York she published an enlarged edition of *Flowering Judas* (1935). Her first short novel, *Hacienda*, had appeared in 1934; her second novelette, *Noon Wine*, was published in 1937. The next year, again on a Guggenheim Fellowship, she went South. In 1939

appeared *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, consisting of the title novelette, *Old Mortality*, and the previously published *Noon Wine*.

Since 1942 Miss Porter has lived in Santa Monica, California. She was writer in residence and lecturer at Leland Stanford University in 1949, and lecturer at the University of Chicago in 1951. *No Safe Harbor* (1941) is a novelette; *The Leaning Tower* (1944), a collection of her later stories. In 1952 she

published *The Days Before*, one of the most impressive of her books, a collection of twenty-nine essays written during a period of thirty years and representing the stored wisdom and intensities of her experience.

Other volumes, besides those mentioned above, include *Outline of Mexican Popular Arts and Crafts*, 1922; *French Song Book*, 1933, translations; *The Itching Parrot*, 1942, translations from Spanish; and *A Defense of Circe*, 1954. H. J. Mooney, *Fiction and Criticism of Katherine Anne Porter*, 1957, is a useful study.

## The Jilting of Granny Weatherall<sup>1</sup>

She flicked her wrist neatly out of Doctor Harry's pudgy careful fingers and pulled the sheet up to her chin. The brat ought to be in knee breeches. Doctoring around the country with spectacles on his nose! "Get along now, take your schoolbooks and go. There's nothing wrong with me."

Doctor Harry spread a warm paw like a cushion on her forehead where the forked green vein danced and made her eyelids twitch. "Now, now, be a good girl, and we'll have you up in no time."

"That's no way to speak to a woman nearly eighty years old just because she's down. I'd have you respect your elders, young man."

"Well, Missy, excuse me." Doctor Harry patted her cheek. "But I've got to warn you, haven't I? You're a marvel, but you must be careful or you're going to be good and sorry."

"Don't tell me what I'm going to be. I'm on my feet now, morally speaking. It's Cornelia. I had to go to bed to get rid of her."

Her bones felt loose, and floated around in her skin, and Doctor Harry floated like a balloon around the foot of the bed. He floated and pulled down his waistcoat and swung his glasses on a cord. "Well, stay where you are, it certainly can't hurt you."

"Get along and doctor your sick," said Granny Weatherall. "Leave a well woman alone. I'll call for you when I want you. . . . Where were you forty years ago when I pulled through milk-leg and double pneumonia? You weren't even born. Don't let Cornelia lead you on," she shouted, because Doctor Harry appeared to float up to the ceiling and out. "I pay my own bills, and I don't throw my money away on nonsense!"

1. "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" was collected in the author's first volume, *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*

(1930). It was first published in *transition* for February, 1929.

She meant to wave good-by, but it was too much trouble. Her eyes closed of themselves, it was like a dark curtain drawn around the bed. The pillow rose and floated under her, pleasant as a hammock in a light wind. She listened to the leaves rustling outside the window. No, somebody was swishing newspapers: no, Cornelia and Doctor Harry were whispering together. She leaped broad awake, thinking they whispered in her ear.

"She was never like this, *never* like this!" "Well, what can we expect?" "Yes, eighty years old. . . ."

Well, and what if she was? She still had ears. It was like Cornelia to whisper around doors. She always kept things secret in such a public way. She was always being tactful and kind. Cornelia was dutiful; that was the trouble with her. Dutiful and good: "So good and dutiful," said Granny, "that I'd like to spank her." She saw herself spanking Cornelia and making a fine job of it.

"What'd you say, Mother?"

Granny felt her face tying up in hard knots.

"Can't a body think, I'd like to know?"

"I thought you might want something."

"I do. I want a lot of things. First off, go away and don't whisper."

She lay and drowsed, hoping in her sleep that the children would keep out and let her rest a minute. It had been a long day. Not that she was tired. It was always pleasant to snatch a minute now and then. There was always so much to be done, let me see: tomorrow.

Tomorrow was far away and there was nothing to trouble about. Things were finished somehow when the time came; thank God there was always a little margin over for peace: then a person could spread out the plan of life and tuck in the edges orderly. It was good to have everything clean and folded away, with the hair brushes and tonic bottles sitting straight on the white embroidered linen: the day started without fuss and the pantry shelves laid out with rows of jelly glasses and brown jugs and white stone-china jars with blue whirligigs and words painted on them: coffee, tea, sugar, ginger, cinnamon, allspice: and the bronze clock with the lion on top nicely dusted off. The dust that lion could collect in twenty-four hours! The box in the attic with all those letters tied up, well, she'd have to go through that tomorrow. All those letters—George's letters and John's letters and her letters to them both—lying around for the children to find afterwards made her uneasy. Yes, that would be tomorrow's business. No use to let them know how silly she had been once.

While she was rummaging around she found death in her mind and it felt clammy and unfamiliar. She had spent so much time

preparing for death there was no need for bringing it up again. Let it take care of itself now. When she was sixty she had felt very old, finished, and went around making farewell trips to see her children and grandchildren, with a secret in her mind: This is the very last of your mother, children! Then she made her will and came down with a long fever. That was all just a notion like a lot of other things, but it was lucky too, for she had once for all got over the idea of dying for a long time. Now she couldn't be worried. She hoped she had better sense now. Her father had lived to be one hundred and two years old and had drunk a noggin of strong hot toddy on his last birthday. He told the reporters it was his daily habit, and he owed his long life to that. He had made quite a scandal and was very pleased about it. She believed she'd just plague Cornelia a little.

"Cornelia! Cornelia!" No footsteps, but a sudden hand on her cheek. "Bless you, where have you been?"

"Here, mother."

"Well, Cornelia, I want a noggin of hot toddy."

"Are you cold, darling?"

"I'm chilly, Cornelia. Lying in bed stops the circulation. I must have told you that a thousand times."

Well, she could just hear Cornelia telling her husband that Mother was getting a little childish and they'd have to humor her. The thing that most annoyed her was that Cornelia thought she was deaf, dumb, and blind. Little hasty glances and tiny gestures tossed around her and over her head saying, "Don't cross her, let her have her way, she's eighty years old," and she sitting there as if she lived in a thin glass cage. Sometimes Granny almost made up her mind to pack up and move back to her own house where nobody could remind her every minute that she was old. Wait, wait, Cornelia, till your own children whisper behind your back!

In her day she had kept a better house and had got more work done. She wasn't too old yet for Lydia to be driving eighty miles for advice when one of the children jumped the track, and Jimmy still dropped in and talked things over: "Now, Mammy, you've a good business head, I want to know what you think of this? . . ." Old. Cornelia couldn't change the furniture around without asking. Little things, little things! They had been so sweet when they were little. Granny wished the old days were back again with the children young and everything to be done over. It had been a hard pull, but not too much for her. When she thought of all the food she had cooked, and all the clothes she had cut and sewed, and all the gardens she had made—well, the children showed it. There they were, made out of her, and they couldn't get away from that. Sometimes she wanted to see John again and point to them and

say, Well, I didn't do so badly, did I? But that would have to wait. That was for tomorrow. She used to think of him as a man, but now all the children were older than their father, and he would be a child beside her if she saw him now. It seemed strange and there was something wrong in the idea. Why, he couldn't possibly recognize her. She had fenced in a hundred acres once, digging the post holes herself and clamping the wires with just a negro boy to help. That changed a woman. John would be looking for a young woman with the peaked Spanish comb in her hair and the painted fan. Digging post holes changed a woman. Riding country roads in the winter when women had their babies was another thing: sitting up nights with sick horses and sick negroes and sick children and hardly ever losing one. John, I hardly ever lost one of them! John would see that in a minute, that would be something he could understand, she wouldn't have to explain anything!

It made her feel like rolling up her sleeves and putting the whole place to rights again. No matter if Cornelia was determined to be everywhere at once, there were a great many things left undone on this place. She would start tomorrow and do them. It was good to be strong enough for everything, even if all you made melted and changed and slipped under your hands, so that by the time you finished you almost forgot what you were working for. What was it I set out to do? she asked herself intently, but she could not remember. A fog rose over the valley, she saw it marching across the creek swallowing the trees and moving up the hill like an army of ghosts. Soon it would be at the near edge of the orchard, and then it was time to go in and light the lamps. Come in, children, don't stay out in the night air.

Lighting the lamps had been beautiful. The children huddled up to her and breathed like little calves waiting at the bars in the twilight. Their eyes followed the match and watched the flame rise and settle in a blue curve, then they moved away from her. The lamp was lit, they didn't have to be scared and hang on to mother any more. Never, never, never more. God, for all my life I thank Thee. Without Thee, my God, I could never have done it. Hail, Mary, full of grace.

I want you to pick all the fruit this year and see that nothing is wasted. There's always someone who can use it. Don't let good things rot for want of using. You waste life when you waste good food. Don't let things get lost. It's bitter to lose things. Now, don't let me get to thinking, not when I am tired and taking a little nap before supper. . . .

The pillow rose about her shoulders and pressed against her heart and the memory was being squeezed out of it: oh, push down the pillow, somebody: it would smother her if she tried to hold it. Such



a fresh breeze blowing and such a green day with no threats in it. But he had not come, just the same. What does a woman do when she has put on the white veil and set out the white cake for a man and he doesn't come? She tried to remember. No, I swear he never harmed me but in that. He never harmed me but in that . . . and what if he did? There was the day, the day, but a whirl of dark smoke rose and covered it, crept up and over into the bright field where everything was planted so carefully in orderly rows. That was hell, she knew hell when she saw it. For sixty years she had prayed against remembering him and against losing her soul in the deep pit of hell, and now the two things were mingled in one and the thought of him was a smoky cloud from hell that moved and crept in her head when she had just got rid of Doctor Harry and was trying to rest a minute. Wounded vanity, Ellen, said a sharp voice in the top of her mind. Don't let your wounded vanity get the upper hand of you. Plenty of girls get jilted. You were jilted, weren't you? Then stand up to it. Her eyelids wavered and let in streamers of blue-gray light like tissue paper over her eyes. She must get up and pull the shades down or she'd never sleep. She was in bed again and the shades were not down. How could that happen? Better turn over, hide from the light, sleeping in the light gave you nightmares. "Mother, how do you feel now?" and a stinging wetness on her forehead. But I don't like having my face washed in cold water!

Hapsy? George? Lydia? Jimmy? No, Cornelia, and her features were swollen and full of little puddles. "They're coming, darling, they'll all be here soon." Go wash your face, child, you look funny.

Instead of obeying, Cornelia knelt down and put her head on the pillow. She seemed to be talking but there was no sound. "Well, are you tongue-tied? Whose birthday is it? Are you going to give a party?"

Cornelia's mouth moved urgently in strange shapes. "Don't do that, you bother me, daughter."

"Oh, no, Mother. Oh, no. . . ."

Nonsense. It was strange about children. They disputed your every word. "No what, Cornelia?"

"Here's Doctor Harry."

"I won't see that boy again. He just left five minutes ago."

"That was this morning, Mother. It's night now. Here's the nurse."

"This is Doctor Harry, Mrs. Weatherall. I never saw you look so young and happy!"

"Ah, I'll never be young again—but I'd be happy if they'd let me lie in peace and get rested."

She thought she spoke up loudly, but no one answered. A warm

weight on her forehead, a warm bracelet on her wrist, and a breeze went on whispering, trying to tell her something. A shuffle of leaves in the everlasting hand of God, He blew on them and they danced and rattled. "Mother, don't mind, we're going to give you a little hypodermic." "Look here, daughter, how do ants get in this bed? I saw sugar ants yesterday." Did you send for Hapsy too?

It was Hapsy she really wanted. She had to go a long way back through a great many rooms to find Hapsy standing with a baby on her arm. She seemed to herself to be Hapsy also, and the baby on Hapsy's arm was Hapsy and himself and herself, all at once, and there was no surprise in the meeting. Then Hapsy melted from within and turned flimsy as gray gauze and the baby was a gauzy shadow, and Hapsy came up close and said, "I thought you'd never come," and looked at her very searchingly and said, "You haven't changed a bit!" They leaned forward to kiss, when Cornelia began whispering from a long way off, "Oh, is there anything you want to tell me? Is there anything I can do for you?"

Yes, she had changed her mind after sixty years and she would like to see George. I want you to find George. Find him and be sure to tell him I forgot him. I want him to know I had my husband just the same and my children and my house like any other woman. A good house too and a good husband that I loved and fine children out of him. Better than I hoped for even. Tell him I was given back everything he took away and more. Oh, no, oh, God, no, there was something else besides the house and the man and the children. Oh, surely they were not all? What was it? Something not given back. . . . Her breath crowded down under her ribs and grew into a monstrous frightening shape with cutting edges; it bored up into her head, and the agony was unbelievable: Yes, John, get the Doctor now, no more talk, my time has come.

When this one was born it should be the last. The last. It should have been born first, for it was the one she had truly wanted. Everything came in good time. Nothing left out, left over. She was strong, in three days she would be as well as ever. Better. A woman needed milk in her to have her full health.

"Mother, do you hear me?"

"I've been telling you—"

"Mother, Father Connolly's here."

"I went to Holy Communion only last week. Tell him I'm not so sinful as all that."

"Father just wants to speak to you."

He could speak as much as he pleased. It was like him to drop in and inquire about her soul as if it were a teething baby, and then stay on for a cup of tea and a round of cards and gossip. He always had a funny story of some sort, usually about an Irishman

who made his little mistakes and confessed them, and the point lay in some absurd thing he would blurt out in the confessional showing his struggles between native piety and original sin. Granny felt easy about her soul. Cornelia, where are your manners? Give Father Connolly a chair. She had her secret comfortable understanding with a few favorite saints who cleared a straight road to God for her. All as surely signed and sealed as the papers for the new Forty Acres. Forever . . . heirs and assigns forever. Since the day the wedding cake was not cut, but thrown out and wasted. The whole bottom dropped out of the world, and there she was blind and swcating with nothing under her feet and the walls falling away. His hand had caught her under the breast, she had not fallen, there was the freshly polished floor with the green rug on it, just as before. He had cursed like a sailor's parrot and said, "I'll kill him for you." Don't lay a hand on him, for my sake leave something to God. "Now, Ellen, you must believe what I tell you. . . ."

So there was nothing, nothing to worry about any more, except sometimes in the night one of the children screamed in a nightmare, and they both hustled out shaking and hunting for the matches and calling, "There, wait a minute, here we are!" John, get the doctor now, Hapsy's time has come. But there was Hapsy standing by the bed in a white cap. "Cornelia, tell Hapsy to take off her cap. I can't see her plain."

Her eyes opened very wide and the room stood out like a picture she had seen somewhere. Dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles. The tall black dresser gleamed with nothing on it but John's picture, enlarged from a little one, with John's eyes very black when they should have been blue. You never saw him, so how do you know how he looked? But the man insisted the copy was perfect, it was very rich and handsome. For a picture, yes, but it's not my husband. The table by the bed had a linen cover and a candle and a crucifix. The light was blue from Cornelia's silk lampshades. No sort of light at all, just frippery. You had to live forty years with kerosene lamps to appreciate honest electricity. She felt very strong and she saw Doctor Harry with a rosy nimbus around him.

"You look like a saint, Doctor Harry, and I vow that's as near as you'll ever come to it."

"She's saying something."

"I heard you, Cornelia. What's all this carrying-on?"

"Father Connolly's saying—"

Cornelia's voice staggered and bumped like a cart in a bad road. It rounded corners and turned back again and arrived nowhere. Granny stepped up in the cart very lightly and reached for the

reins, but a man sat beside her and she knew him by his hands, driving the cart. She did not look in his face, for she knew without seeing, but looked instead down the road where the trees leaned over and bowed to each other and a thousand birds were singing a Mass. She felt like singing too, but she put her hand in the bosom of her dress and pulled out a rosary, and Father Connolly murmured Latin in a very solemn voice and tickled her feet. My God, will you stop that nonsense? I'm a married woman. What if he did run away and leave me to face the priest by myself? I found another a whole world better. I wouldn't have exchanged my husband for anybody except St. Michael himself, and you may tell him that for me with a thank you in the bargain.

Light flashed on her closed eyelids, and a deep roaring shook her. Cornelia, is that lightning? I hear thunder. There's going to be a storm. Close all the windows. Call the children in. . . . "Mother, here we are, all of us." "Is that you, Hapsy?" "Oh, no, I'm Lydia. We drove as fast as we could." Their faces drifted above her, drifted away. The rosary fell out of her hands and Lydia put it back. Jimmy tried to help, their hands fumbled together, Granny closed two fingers around Jimmy's thumb. Beads wouldn't do, it must be something alive. She was so amazed her thoughts ran round and round. So, my dear Lord, this is my death and I wasn't even thinking about it. My children have come to see me die. But I can't, it's not time. Oh, I always hated surprises. I wanted to give Cornelia the amethyst set—Cornelia, you're to have the amethyst set, but Hapsy's to wear it when she wants, and, Doctor Harry, do shut up. Nobody sent for you. Oh, my dear Lord, do wait a minute. I meant to do something about the Forty Acres, Jimmy doesn't need it and Lydia will later on, with that worthless husband of hers. I meant to finish the altar cloth and send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia for her dyspepsia. I want to send six bottles of wine to Sister Borgia, Father Connolly, now don't let me forget.

Cornelia's voice made short turns and tilted over and crashed. "Oh, Mother, oh, Mother, oh, Mother. . . ."

"I'm not going, Cornelia. I'm taken by surprise. I can't go."

You'll see Hapsy again. What about her? "I thought you'd never come." Granny made a long journey outward, looking for Hapsy. What if I don't find her? What then? Her heart sank down and down, there was no bottom to death, she couldn't come to the end of it. The blue light from Cornelia's lampshade drew into a tiny point in the center of her brain, it flickered and winked like an eye, quietly it fluttered and dwindled. Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself; her body was now only a deeper mass of shadow in an endless darkness and this darkness would curl around the light and

swallow it up. God, give a sign!

For the second time there was no sign. Again no bridegroom and the priest in the house.<sup>2</sup> She could not remember any other sorrow because this grief wiped them all away. Oh, no, there's nothing more cruel than this—I'll never forgive it. She stretched herself with a deep breath and blew out the light.

1929, 1930

2. Cf. Christ's parable of the bridegroom (Matthew xxv: 1-13).

## WILLIAM FAULKNER

(1897-)

In creative genius, in the ability to construct a world of the imagination in which reality is more accessible than it is in the everyday actualities of life, William Faulkner has few peers in modern literature. This fact was only tardily recognized. His writing is so difficult, obscure, serious, and often disagreeable that many of his works were not widely read, and the recognition of his highest powers was attainable only in perspective. There was an ironical appropriateness in the fact that the Nobel committee, although for reasons not immediately connected with Faulkner's merits, was unable to reach a decision at the appointed time, and awarded him the 1949 Prize for literature a year late. Faulkner's full stature cannot be measured in any single work; however good in itself, the novel or story is usually integrated in a larger pattern with characters and events from other writings.

Faulkner regards his major works as a "saga," a reconstruction of the life of Yoknapatawpha County, his fictional name for Lafayette County in northern Mississippi, where he lives at Ox-

ford (the "Jefferson" of his novels). The documentary sources of his stories are family papers and county records extending, as in *The Bear*, back to the first settlements among the Indians. Yet if these are the materials of local social history, he also thinks that he should be able to find in them the record of the human spirit anywhere. He emphasized this central purpose in his address in acceptance of the Nobel Prize, in which he told younger writers that the only subject "worth the agony and sweat" of the artist is "the human heart in conflict with itself."

Since about 1925, Faulkner has lived quietly in Oxford, Mississippi, in the seclusion of the old house with its columned portico, belatedly depicted in popular media. Since then, as university writer in residence and public figure, his personal influence has been forceful. He was born on September 25, 1897, in New Albany, Mississippi, but the family soon moved to Oxford, the seat of the University of Mississippi. His great-grandfather, William Falkner [*sic*],

had written a popular southern romance, but the boy was not literary in a marked way, and did not finish high school. In 1918, at the age of twenty-one, he enlisted in the Canadian Royal Flying Corps, but in about a year he returned to Oxford, where he next attended the University for two years. In 1922 he took a position as postmaster at the University; but having recently discovered a desire to write, in 1924 he went to New Orleans with newspaper work in mind. There he became a friend of Sherwood Anderson, then completing *Dark Laughter*; through him Faulkner became one of those associated with *The Double-Dealer*, an experimental magazine, in which he published verse and criticism. That year he prepared a collection of poems entitled *The Marble Faun* (1924). In New Orleans he wrote two novels, neither of ultimate consequence.

In 1925 he was again settled at Oxford. It has been reported that he worked as carpenter and farmer to provide for the publication of his first two novels. In 1929 he was able to publish two more, the beginning of his significant and mature work: *Sartoris*, which initiated the Yoknapatawpha cycle with a study of the Sartoris family; and *The Sound and the Fury*, which introduced the Compsons, a related family, and gave the world its first experience of this author's combination of experimental techniques and psychological violence. The novels of the cycle move on several planes of southern society. There are the old clans of Sartoris, Compson, Sutpen, McCaslin, de Spain,

and others, some of them now in a condition of decadence, and others just as significantly readjusted to new social conditions. There are the older townspeople, generally substantial in character, in contrast with the Snopes clan, of whom Faulkner and his Oxford cronies made almost an oral legend before the sketches were published in magazines. Three novels chronicle Flem Snopes, leader of rapacious kindred who emerge from backwoods burrows like rodents, to gnaw the props from under the old order. Flem grabs political and financial control; he uses a pretty wife to disgrace and depose the highborn Mayor, de Spain. He acquires the de Spain mansion, only to be destroyed, ironically by a Snopes whom he had betrayed. The early serial stories were reconstructed as *The Hamlet* (1940); *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959) complete this comic epic. The older families, whether planters or townspeople, hold in recollection the pioneers who first conquered the land, the "old people," as a heritage that they share with such woodsmen, part Indian, as Sam Fathers and Boon Hogganbeck in the stories of *Go Down, Moses* (1942), among them *The Bear*. Curiously too, the Negroes have withstood better than the white people the shifting ordeals of history. There are scamps among them, but Faulkner emphasizes the strength of such Negroes as Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* and Lucas Beauchamp, last seen in *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). In the Yoknapatawpha group, *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), and

*The Unvanquished* (1938) are significant works. *As I Lay Dying* (1930) utilizes a folk tale concerning a delayed burial in a psychological study of the degenerated "poor whites." *Sans-tuary* (1931) is a classic of horror and degradation representing the corruption of small-town youth and the power of criminality in the age of jazz and prohibition. Its recent sequel is *Requiem for a Nun* (1951). *The Wild Palms* (1939) and its twin, the popular *Old Man*, counterpoint a theme: in one, two lovers are destroyed by passionate violence; in the latter, a derelict convict and a lost woman, in the violence of an "Old Man" Mississippi flood, experience love and birth. *A Fable* (1954) is a retelling of the events of Holy Week, with the time and place shifted to World War I in France.

Faulkner's complex style may be regarded as consistent with his difficult objective—to keep continuously in focus the immediate character, "the human heart in conflict," while evoking that past which is always present with us. His style observes the conventions of a new prose, no more strict or unnatural than the conventions of poetry, and similarly intended to engage the imaginative participation of the reader and to provide a language more subjective and flexible than ordinary prose. This rhetorical convention—the dislocation of logical construction in the free association of images, often apparently, but only apparently, ir-

relevant to each other—facilitates Faulkner's psychological approach, the projection of events through the memory or consciousness of the character in the form of "interior monologue." No doubt Faulkner's style puts a burden on the reader, but whether or not he carries it further than may be necessary for his purposes, it has the effect of music and poetry in requiring active correspondence between the artist and the audience.

In 1950 Faulkner received not only the Nobel Prize, but also the National Book Award for his *Collected Stories*. The opportunity to study the stories in one volume was another invitation to reconsider Faulkner's work as a whole, and this reconsideration has added greatly to the public understanding of a major artist.

Besides those mentioned above, Faulkner's novels, not yet collected, are *Soldier's Pay*, 1926; *Mosquitoes*, 1927; *Pylon*, 1935. Volumes of short stories are *Idyll in the Desert*, 1931; *These 13: Stories*, 1931; *Miss Zilphia Gant*, 1932; *Doctor Martino and Other Stories*, 1934; *Go Down, Moses, and Other Stories*, 1942; *Knight's Gambit*, 1949; *Notes on a Horse Thief*, 1950; *Collected Stories of William Faulkner*, 1950; and *Big Woods*, 1955. Faulkner's poems appear in *The Marble Faun*, 1924; *Salmagundi*, 1932; *This Earth*, 1932; *A Green Bough*, 1933. *The Portable Faulkner*, 1946, is a good selection.

Biographical and critical studies are Hyatt Waggoner, *William Faulkner, From Jefferson to the World*, 1960; H. M. Campbell and R. E. Foster, *William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal*, 1951; *William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, edited by F. J. Hoffman and O. W. Vickery, 1951; Irving Howe, *William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, 1952; William V. O'Connor, *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner*, 1954; and W. L. Miner, *The World of William Faulkner*, 1952.

The Bear<sup>1</sup>

## I

There was a man and a dog too this time. Two beasts, counting Old Ben, the bear, and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck, in whom some of the same blood ran which ran in Sam Fathers, even though Boon's was a plebeian strain of it and only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible.

He<sup>2</sup> was sixteen. For six years now he had been a man's hunter. For six years now he had heard the best of all talking. It was of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document; of white man fatuous enough to believe he had bought any fragment of it, of Indian ruthless enough to pretend that any fragment of it had been his to convey; bigger than Major de Spain<sup>3</sup> and the scrap he pretended to, knowing better; older than old Thomas Sutpen of whom Major de Spain had had it and who knew better; older even than old Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, of whom old Sutpen had had it and who knew better in his turn. It was of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive, and the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and relieved against it, ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter;—the best game of all, the best of all breathing and forever the best of all listening, the voices quiet and weighty and deliberate for retrospection and recollection and exactitude among the concrete trophies—the racked guns and the heads and skins—in the libraries of town houses or the offices of plantation houses or (and best of all) in the camps themselves where the intact and still-warm meat

1. An early draft of part of this story appeared in *Harper's Magazine* for December, 1935, entitled "Lion." Another abbreviated version, called "The Bear," appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* for May 9, 1942. The full story was first printed in *Go Down, Moses, and Other Stories* (1942). Malcolm Cowley, in *The Portable Faulkner*, places this story in "the last frontier" of Mississippi, about 1883. In Faulkner's novels of Yoknapatawpha County, the McCaslin family, and the Sartoris, Sutpen, and de Spain families are the "old people"; not all of them aristocrats, but all eligible as recognized guardians of a good tradition. An aspect of that tradition is here represented in the scrupulous honor and fortitude of the farmer and hunter, Isaac McCaslin, now sixteen, the son of Theophilus ("Uncle Buck"), and grandson of Carothers McCaslin, must prove, in the ancient ordeal

of the hunt, his right to stand with men. The discipline of this clean and relentless integrity comes to him not only through the great men of the clans, but just as much from those whose veins carry Indian or Negro blood—from Sam Fathers and Boon Hogganbeck, in whom also survive "the old free fathers"—from the savage fidelity of the dog, Lion, and from "the wild and invincible spirit of an old bear," Ben, the unconquered. Isaac learns so well that he repudiates the inheritance of his family (Part IV), because of his grandfather, Carothers, whose infidelity he reads between the lines of the plantation records.

2. That is, Isaac McCaslin.

3. Major Cassius de Spain's investments have gradually brought him ownership of extensive lands, formerly the Sutpens', including the great woodlands with the hunting lodge, scene of the present story.



yet hung, the men who had slain it sitting before the burning logs on hearths when there were houses and hearths or about the smoky blazing of piled wood in front of stretched tarpaulins when there were not. There was always a bottle present, so that it would seem to him that those fine fierce instants of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated and distilled into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank, drinking not of the blood they spilled but some condensation of the wild immortal spirit, drinking it moderately, humbly even, not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring thereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them. Thus it seemed to him on this December morning not only natural but actually fitting that this should have begun with whisky.

He realized later that it had begun long before that. It had already begun on that day when he first wrote his age in two ciphers and his cousin McCaslin<sup>4</sup> brought him for the first time to the camp, the big woods, to earn for himself from the wilderness the name and state of hunter provided he in his turn were humble and enduring enough. He had already inherited then, without ever having seen it, the big old bear with one trap-ruined foot that in an area almost a hundred miles square had earned for himself a name, a definite designation like a living man:—the long legend of corn-cribs broken down and rifled, of shoats and grown pigs and even calves carried bodily into the woods and devoured and traps and deadfalls overthrown and dogs mangled and slain and shotgun and even rifle shots delivered at point-blank range yet with no more effect than so many peas blown through a tube by a child—a corridor of wreckage and destruction beginning back before the boy was born, through which sped, not fast but rather with the ruthless and irresistible deliberation of a locomotive, the shaggy tremendous shape. It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print, shaggy, tremendous, red-eyed, not malevolent but just big, too big for the dogs which tried to bay it, for the horses which tried to ride it down, for the men and the bullets they fired into it; too big for the very country which was its constricting scope. It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name, and through which ran not even a mortal beast but

4. Carothers McCaslin Edmonds, an older cousin of Isaac's, sometimes called

"Cass" in Faulkner's writings, as later in this story.

an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;—the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed childless and absolved of mortality—old Priam<sup>5</sup> reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons.

Still a child, with three years then two years then one year yet before he too could make one of them, each November he would watch the wagon containing the dogs and the bedding and food and guns and his cousin McCaslin and Tennie's Jim<sup>6</sup> and Sam Fathers too until Sam moved to the camp to live, depart for the Big Bottom, the big woods. To him, they were going not to hunt bear and deer but to keep yearly rendezvous with the bear which they did not even intend to kill. Two weeks later they would return, with no trophy, no skin. He had not expected it. He had not even feared that it might be in the wagon this time with the other skins and heads. He did not even tell himself that in three years or two years or one year more he would be present and that it might even be his gun. He believed that only after he had served his apprenticeship in the woods which would prove him worthy to be a hunter, would he even be permitted to distinguish the crooked print, and that even then for two November weeks he would merely make another minor one, along with his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson and Walter Ewell and Boon and the dogs which feared to bay it and the shotguns and rifles which failed even to bleed it, in the yearly pageant-rite of the old bear's furious immortality.

His day came at last. In the surrey with his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson he saw the wilderness through a slow drizzle of November rain just above the ice point as it seemed to him later he always saw it or at least always remembered it—the tall and endless wall of dense November woods under the dissolving afternoon and the year's death, sombre, impenetrable (he could not even discern yet how, at what point they could possibly hope to enter it even though he knew that Sam Fathers was waiting there with the wagon), the surrey moving through the skeleton stalks of cotton and corn in the last of open country, the last trace of man's puny gnawing at the immemorial flank, until, dwarfed by that per-

5. King Priam of Troy lost his fifty sons in the war with Greece; the last of them, the great Hector, slain by Achilles. Queen Hecuba, however, was not taken captive until after Priam's death. Cf. Homer's *Iliad*.

6. The handy man for the party. Son of the Negro Tennie Beauchamp, Jim is

also the grandson, by a Negro slave girl, of Carothers McCaslin, whose legitimate grandchildren include Isaac McCaslin and Carothers McCaslin Edmonds, among the characters in *The Bear*. The remarkable Lucas Beauchamp, of *Intruder in the Dust*, is Jim's son.

spective into an almost ridiculous diminishment, the survey itself seemed to have ceased to move (this too to be completed later, years later, after he had grown to a man and had seen the sea) as a solitary small boat hangs in lonely immobility, merely tossing up and down, in the infinite waste of the ocean while the water and then the apparently impenetrable land which it nears without appreciable progress, swings slowly and opens the widening inlet which is the anchorage. He entered it. Sam was waiting, wrapped in a quilt on the wagon seat behind the patient and steaming mules. He entered his novitiate to the true wilderness with Sam beside him as he had begun his apprenticeship in miniature to manhood after the rabbits and such with Sam beside him, the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm, Negro-rank quilt, while the wilderness closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him, opening before his advancement as it closed behind his progress, no fixed path the wagon followed but a channel non-existent ten yards ahead of it and ceasing to exist ten yards after it had passed, the wagon progressing not by its own volition but by attrition of their intact yet fluid circumambience, drowsing, earless, almost lightless.

It seemed to him that at the age of ten he was witnessing his own birth. It was not even strange to him. He had experienced it all before, and not merely in dreams. He saw the camp—a paintless six-room bungalow set on piles above the spring high-water—and he knew already how it was going to look. He helped in the rapid orderly disorder of their establishment in it and even his motions were familiar to him, foreknown. Then for two weeks he ate the coarse, rapid food—the shapeless sour bread, the wild strange meat, venison and bear and turkey and coon which he had never tasted before—which men ate, cooked by men who were hunters first and cooks afterward; he slept in harsh sheetless blankets as hunters slept. Each morning the gray of dawn found him and Sam Fathers on the stand, the crossing, which had been allotted him. It was the poorest one, the most barren. He had expected that; he had not dared yet to hope even to himself that he would even hear the running dogs this first time. But he did hear them. It was on the third morning—a murmur, sourceless, almost indistinguishable, yet he knew what it was although he had never before heard that many dogs running at once, the murmur swelling into separate and distinct voices until he could call the five dogs which his cousin owned from among the others. “Now,” Sam said, “slant your gun up a little and draw back the hammers and then stand still.”

But it was not for him, not yet. The humility was there; he had learned that. And he could learn the patience. He was only ten, only one week. The instant had passed. It seemed to him that he could

actually see the deer, the buck, smoke-colored, elongated with speed, vanished, the woods, the gray solitude still ringing even when the voices of the dogs had died away; from far away across the sombre woods and the gray half-liquid morning there came two shots. "Now let your hammers down," Sam said.

He did so. "You knew it too," he said.

"Yes," Sam said. "I want you to learn how to do when you didn't shoot. It's after the chance for the bear or the deer has done already come and gone that men and dogs get killed."

"Anyway, it wasn't him," the boy said. "It wasn't even a bear. It was just a deer."

"Yes," Sam said, "it was just a deer."

Then one morning, it was in the second week, he heard the dogs again. This time before Sam even spoke he readied the too-long, too-heavy, man-size gun as Sam had taught him, even though this time he knew the dogs and the deer were coming less close than ever, hardly within hearing even. They didn't sound like any running dogs he had ever heard before even. Then he found that Sam, who had taught him first of all to cock the gun and take position where he could see best in all directions and then never to move again, had himself moved up beside him. "There," he said. "Listen." The boy listened, to no ringing chorus strong and fast on a free scent but, a moiling yapping an octave too high and with something more than indecision and even abjectness in it which he could not yet recognize, reluctant, not even moving very fast, taking a long time to pass out of hearing, leaving even then in the air that echo of thin and almost human hysteria, abject, almost humanly grieving, with this time nothing ahead of it, no sense of a fleeing unseen smoke-colored shape. He could hear Sam breathing at his shoulder. He saw the arched curve of the old man's inhaling nostrils.

"It's Old Ben!" he cried, whispering.

Sam didn't move save for the slow gradual turning of his head as the voices faded on and the faint steady rapid arch and collapse of his nostrils. "Hah," he said. "Not even running. Walking."

"But up here!" the boy cried. "Way up here!"

"He do it every year," Sam said. "Once. Ash and Boon say he comes up here to run the other little bears away. Tell them to get to hell out of here and stay out until the hunters are gone. Maybe." The boy no longer heard anything at all, yet still Sam's head continued to turn gradually and steadily until the back of it was toward him. Then it turned back and looked down at him—the same face, grave, familiar, expressionless until it smiled, the same old man's eyes from which as he watched there faded slowly a quality darkly and fiercely lambent, passionate and proud. "He dont care no more for bears than he does for dogs or men neither. He come to see who's

here, who's new in camp this year, whether he can shoot or not, can stay or not. Whether we got the dog yet that can bay and hold him until a man gets there with a gun. Because he's the head bear. He's the man." It faded, was gone; again they were the eyes as he had known them all his life. "He'll let them follow him to the river. Then he'll send them home. We might as well go too; see how they look when they get back to camp."

The dogs were there first, ten of them huddled back under the kitchen, himself and Sam squatting to peer back into the obscurity where they crouched, quiet, the eyes rolling and luminous, vanishing, and no sound, only that effluvium which the boy could not quite place yet, of something more than dog, stronger than dog and not just animal, just beast even. Because there had been nothing in front of the abject and painful yapping except the solitude, the wilderness, so that when the eleventh hound got back about mid-afternoon and he and Tennie's Jim held the passive and still trembling bitch while Sam daubed her tattered ear and raked shoulder with turpentine and axle-grease, it was still no living creature but only the wilderness which, leaning for a moment, had patted lightly once her temerity. "Just like a man," Sam said. "Just like folks. Put off as long as she could having to be brave, knowing all the time that sooner or later she would have to be brave once so she could keep on calling herself a dog, and knowing beforehand what was going to happen when she done it."

He did not know just when Sam left. He only knew that he was gone. For the next three mornings he rose and ate breakfast and Sam was not waiting for him. He went to his stand alone; he found it without help now and stood on it as Sam had taught him. On the third morning he heard the dogs again, running strong and free on a true scent again, and he readied the gun as he had learned to do and heard the hunt sweep past on since he was not ready yet, had not deserved other yet in just one short period of two weeks as compared to all the long life which he had already dedicated to the wilderness with patience and humility; he heard the shot again, one shot, the single clapping report of Walter Ewell's rifle. By now he could not only find his stand and then return to camp without guidance, by using the compass his cousin had given him he reached Walter, waiting beside the buck and the moiling of dogs over the cast entrails before any of the others except Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim on the horses, even before Uncle Ash<sup>7</sup> arrived with the one-eyed wagon-mule which did not mind the smell of blood or even, so they said, of bear.

It was not Uncle Ash on the mule. It was Sam, returned. And Sam was waiting when he finished his dinner and, himself on the

7. The familiar name of the Negro camp cook and handy man.

one-eyed mule and Sam on the other one of the wagon team, they rode for more than three hours through the rapid shortening sunless afternoon, following no path, no trail even that he could discern, into a section of country he had never seen before. Then he understood why Sam had made him ride the one-eyed mule which would not spook<sup>8</sup> at the smell of blood, of wild animals. The other one, the sound one, stopped short and tried to whirl and bolt even as Sam got down, jerking and wrenching at the rein while Sam held it, coaxing it forward with his voice since he did not dare risk hitching it, drawing it forward while the boy dismounted from the marred one which would stand. Then, standing beside Sam in the thick great gloom of ancient woods and the winter's dying afternoon, he looked quietly down at the rotted log scored and gutted with claw-marks and, in the wet earth beside it, the print of the enormous warped two-toed foot. Now he knew what he had heard in the hounds' voices in the woods that morning and what he had smelled when he peered under the kitchen where they huddled. It was in him too, a little different because they were brute beasts and he was not, but only a little different—an eagerness, passive; an abjectness, a sense of his own fragility and impotence against the timeless woods, yet without doubt or dread; a flavor like brass in the sudden run of saliva in his mouth, a hard sharp constriction either in his brain or his stomach, he could not tell which and it did not matter; he knew only that for the first time he realized that the bear which had run in his listening and loomed in his dreams since before he could remember and which therefore must have existed in the listening and the dreams of his cousin and Major de Spain and even old General Compson before they began to remember in their turn, was a mortal animal and that they had departed for the camp each November with no actual intention of slaying it, not because it could not be slain but because so far they had no actual hope of being able to. "It will be tomorrow," he said.

"You mean we will try tomorrow," Sam said. "We aint got the dog yet."

"We've got eleven," he said. "They ran him Monday."

"And you heard them," Sam said. "Saw them too. We aint got the dog yet. It wont take but one. But he aint there. Maybe he aint nowhere. The only other way will be for him to run by accident over somebody that had a gun and knowed how to shoot it."

"That wouldn't be me," the boy said. "It would be Walter or Major or—"

"It might," Sam said. "You watch close tomorrow. Because he's smart. That's how come he has lived this long. If he gets hemmed up and has got to pick out somebody to run over, he will pick out

8. Rear or run in fright.

you."

"How?" he said. "How will he know. . . ." He ceased. "You mean he already knows me, that I aint never been to the big bottom before, aint had time to find out yet whether I . . ." He ceased again, staring at Sam; he said humbly, not even amazed: "It was me he was watching. I dont reckon he did need to come but once."

"You watch tomorrow," Sam said. "I reckon we better start back. It'll be long after dark now before we get to camp."

The next morning they started three hours earlier than they had ever done. Even Uncle Ash went, the cook, who called himself by profession a camp cook and who did little else save cook for Major de Spain's hunting and camping parties, yet who had been marked by the wilderness from simple juxtaposition to it until he responded as they all did, even the boy who until two weeks ago had never even seen the wilderness, to a hound's ripped ear and shoulder and the print of a crooked foot in a patch of wet earth. They rode. It was too far to walk: the boy and Sam and Uncle Ash in the wagon with the dogs, his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson and Boon and Walter and Tennie's Jim riding double on the horses; again the first gray light found him, as on that first morning two weeks ago, on the stand where Sam had placed and left him. With the gun which was too big for him, the breech-loader which did not even belong to him but to Major de Spain and which he had fired only once, at a stump on the first day to learn the recoil and how to reload it with the paper shells, he stood against a big gum tree beside a little bayou whose black still water crept without motion out of a cane-brake, across a small clearing and into the cane again, where, invisible, a bird, the big woodpecker called Lord-to-God by negroes, clattered at a dead trunk. It was a stand like any other stand, dissimilar only in incidentals to the one where he had stood each morning for two weeks; a territory new to him yet no less familiar than that other one which after two weeks he had come to believe he knew a little—the same solitude, the same loneliness through which frail and timorous man had merely passed without altering it, leaving no mark nor scar, which looked exactly as it must have looked when the first ancestor of Sam Fathers' Chickasaw predecessors crept into it and looked about him, club or stone axe or bone arrow drawn and ready, different only because, squatting at the edge of the kitchen, he had smelled the dogs huddled and cringing beneath it and saw the raked ear and side of the bitch that, as Sam had said, had to be brave once in order to keep on calling herself a dog, and saw yesterday in the earth beside the gutted log, the print of the living foot. He heard no dogs at all. He never did certainly hear them. He only heard the drumming of the woodpecker stop short off, and knew that the

bear was looking at him. He never saw it. He did not know whether it was facing him from the cane or behind him. He did not move, holding the useless gun which he knew now he would never fire at it, now or ever, tasting in his saliva that taint of brass which he had smelled in the huddled dogs when he peered under the kitchen.

Then it was gone. As abruptly as it had stopped, the woodpecker's dry hammering set up again, and after a while he believed he even heard the dogs—a murmur, scarce a sound even, which he had probably been hearing for a time, perhaps a minute or two, before he remarked it, drifting into hearing and then out again, dying away. They came nowhere near him. If it was dogs he heard, he could not have sworn to it; if it was a bear they ran, it was another bear. It was Sam himself who emerged from the cane and crossed the bayou, the injured bitch following at heel as a bird dog is taught to walk. She came and crouched against his leg, trembling. "I didn't see him," he said. "I didn't, Sam."

"I know it," Sam said. "He done the looking. You didn't hear him neither, did you?"

"No," the boy said. "I—"

"He's smart," Sam said. "Too smart." Again the boy saw in his eyes that quality of dark and brooding lambence as Sam looked down at the bitch trembling faintly and steadily against the boy's leg. From her raked shoulder a few drops of fresh blood clung like bright berries. "Too big. We aint got the dog yet. But maybe some day."

Because there would be a next time, after and after. He was only ten. It seemed to him that he could see them, the two of them, shadowy in the limbo from which time emerged and became time: the old bear absolved of mortality and himself who shared a little of it. Because he recognised now what he had smelled in the huddled dogs and tasted in his own saliva, recognised fear as a boy, a youth, recognises the existence of love and passion and experience which is his heritage but not yet his patrimony, from entering by chance the presence or perhaps even merely the bedroom of a woman who has loved and been loved by many men. *So I will have to see him*, he thought, without dread or even hope. *I will have to look at him*. So it was in June of the next summer. They were at the camp again, celebrating Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthdays. Although the one had been born in September and the other in the depth of winter and almost thirty years earlier, each June the two of them and McCaslin and Boon and Walter Ewell (and the boy too from now on) spent two weeks at the camp, fishing and shooting squirrels and turkey and running coons and wildcats with the dogs at night. That is, Boon and the negroes (and the boy too now) fished and shot squirrels and ran the coons and



cats, because the proven hunters, not only Major de Spain and old General Compson (who spent those two weeks sitting in a rocking chair before a tremendous iron pot of Brunswick stew, stirring and tasting, with Uncle Ash to quarrel with about how he was making it and Tennie's Jim to pour whisky into the tin dipper from which he drank it), but even McCaslin and Walter Ewell who were still young enough, scorned such other than shooting the wild gobblers with pistols for wagers or to test their marksmanship.

That is, his cousin McCaslin and the others thought he was hunting squirrels. Until the third evening he believed that Sam Fathers thought so too. Each morning he would leave the camp right after breakfast. He had his own gun now, a new breech-loader, a Christmas gift; he would own and shoot it for almost seventy years, through two new pairs of barrels and locks and one new stock, until all that remained of the original gun was the silver-inlaid trigger-guard with his and McCaslin's engraved names and the date in 1878. He found the tree beside the little bayou where he had stood that morning. Using the compass he ranged from that point; he was teaching himself to be better than a fair woodsman without even knowing he was doing it. On the third day he even found the gutted log where he had first seen the print. It was almost completely crumbled now, healing with unbelievable speed, a passionate and almost visible relinquishment, back into the earth from which the tree had grown. He ranged the summer woods now, green with gloom, if anything actually dimmer than they had been in November's gray dissolution, where even at noon the sun fell only in windless dappling upon the earth which never completely dried and which crawled with snakes—moccasins and watersnakes and rattlers, themselves the color of the dappled gloom so that he would not always see them until they moved; returning to camp later and later and later, first day, second day, passing in the twilight of the third evening the little log pen enclosing the log barn where Sam was putting up the stock for the night. "You aint looked right yet," Sam said.

He stopped. For a moment he didn't answer. Then he said peacefully, in a peaceful rushing burst, as when a boy's miniature dam in a little brook gives way: "All right. Yes. But how? I went to the bayou. I even found that log again. I—"

"I reckon that was all right. Likely he's been watching you. You never saw his foot?"

"I . . ." the boy said. "I didn't . . . I never thought . . ."

"It's the gun," Sam said. He stood beside the fence, motionless, the old man, son of a negro slave and a Chickasaw chief, in the battered and faded overalls and the frayed five-cent straw hat which had been the badge of the negro's slavery and was now the

regalia of his freedom. The camp—the clearing, the house, the barn and its tiny lot with which Major de Spain in his turn had scratched punily and evanescently at the wilderness—faded in the dusk, back into the immemorial darkness of the woods. *The gun*, the boy thought. *The gun*. “You will have to choose,” Sam said.

He left the next morning before light, without breakfast, long before Uncle Ash would wake in his quilts on the kitchen floor and start the fire. He had only the compass and a stick for the snakes. He could go almost a mile before he would need to see the compass. He sat on a log, the invisible compass in his hand, while the secret night-sounds which had ceased at his movements, scurried again and then fell still for good and the owls ceased and gave over to the waking day birds and there was light in the gray wet woods and he could see the compass. He went fast yet still quietly, becoming steadily better and better as a woodsman without yet having time to realise it; he jumped a doc and a fawn, walked them out of the bed, close enough to see them—the crash of undergrowth, the white scut, the fawn scudding along behind her, faster than he had known it could have run. He was hunting right, upwind, as Sam had taught him, but that didn’t matter now. He had left the gun; by his own will and relinquishment he had accepted not a gambit, not a choice, but a condition in which not only the bear’s heretofore inviolable anonymity but all the ancient rules and balances of hunter and hunted had been abrogated. He would not even be afraid, not even in the moment when the fear would take him completely: blood, skin, bowels, bones, memory from the long time before it even became his memory—all save that thin clear quenchless lucidity which alone differed him from this bear and from all the other bears and bucks he would follow during almost seventy years, to which Sam had said: “Be scared. You cant help that. But dont be afraid. Aint nothing in the woods going to hurt you if you dont corner it or it dont smell that you are afraid. A bear or a deer has got to be scared of a coward the same as a brave man has got to be.”

By noon he was far beyond the crossing on the little bayou, farther into the new and alien country than he had ever been, travelling now not only by the compass but by the old, heavy, biscuit-thick silver watch which had been his father’s. He had left the camp nine hours ago; nine hours from now, dark would already have been an hour old. He stopped, for the first time since he had risen from the log when he could see the compass face at last, and looked about, mopping his sweating face on his sleeve. He had already relinquished, of his will, because of his need, in humility and peace and without regret, yet apparently that had not been enough, the leaving of the gun was not enough. He stood for a mo-

ment—a child, alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. Then he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. He removed the linked chain of the one and the looped thong of the other from his overalls and hung them on a bush and leaned the stick beside them and entered it.

When he realised he was lost, he did as Sam had coached and drilled him: made a cast to cross his back-track. He had not been going very fast for the last two or three hours, and he had gone even less fast since he left the compass and watch on the bush. So he went slower still now, since the tree could not be very far; in fact, he found it before he really expected to and turned and went to it. But there was no bush beneath it, no compass nor watch, so he did next as Sam had coached and drilled him: made this next circle in the opposite direction and much larger, so that the pattern of the two of them would bisect his track somewhere, but crossing no trace nor mark anywhere of his feet or any feet, and now he was going faster though still not panicked, his heart beating a little more rapidly but strong and steady enough, and this time it was not even the tree because there was a down log beside it which he had never seen before and beyond the log a little swamp, a seepage of moisture somewhere between earth and water, and he did what Sam had coached and drilled him as the next and the last, seeing as he sat down on the log the crooked print, the warped indentation in the wet ground which while he looked at it continued to fill with water until it was level full and the water began to overflow and the sides of the print began to dissolve away. Even as he looked up he saw the next one, and, moving, the one beyond it; moving, not hurrying, running, but merely keeping pace with them as they appeared before him as though they were being shaped out of thin air just one constant pace short of where he would lose them forever and be lost forever himself, tireless, eager, without doubt or dread, panting a little above the strong rapid little hammer of his heart, emerging suddenly into a little glade, and the wilderness coalesced. It rushed, soundless, and solidified—the tree, the bush, the compass and the watch glinting where a ray of sunlight touched them. Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge

old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.

## II

So he should have hated and feared Lion.<sup>9</sup> He was thirteen then. He had killed his buck and Sam Fathers had marked his face with the hot blood,<sup>1</sup> and in the next November he killed a bear. But before that accolade he had become as competent in the woods as many grown men with the same experience. By now he was a better woodsman than most grown men with more. There was no territory within twenty-five miles of the camp that he did not know—bayou, ridge, landmark trees and path; he could have led anyone direct to any spot in it and brought him back. He knew game trails that even Sam Fathers had never seen; in the third fall he found a buck's bedding-place by himself and unbeknown to his cousin he borrowed Walter Ewell's rifle and lay in wait for the buck at dawn and killed it when it walked back to the bed as Sam had told him how the old Chickasaw fathers did.

By now he knew the old bear's footprint better than he did his own, and not only the crooked one. He could see any one of the three sound prints and distinguish it at once from any other, and not only because of its size. There were other bears within that fifty miles which left tracks almost as large, or at least so near that the one would have appeared larger only by juxtaposition. It was more than that. If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater.

He could find the crooked print now whenever he wished, ten miles or five miles or sometimes closer than that, to the camp. Twice while on stand during the next three years he heard the dogs strike its trail and once even jump it by chance, the voices high, abject, almost human in their hysteria. Once, still-hunting<sup>2</sup> with Walter Ewell's rifle, he saw it cross a long corridor of down timber where a tornado had passed. It rushed through rather than across the tangle of trunks and branches as a locomotive would, faster than he had ever believed it could have moved, almost as fast as a deer even because the deer would have spent most of that distance in the air; he realised then why it would take a dog not only of abnormal courage but size and speed too ever to bring it to bay. He had a little dog at home, a mongrel, of the sort called fyce<sup>3</sup> by negroes, a ratter, itself not much bigger than a rat and possessing that sort

9. The "incorruptible" dog predestined to bring to bay the big bear. Cf. the first paragraph of the story.

1. Certain Indian tribes ritually

anointed the young hunter with the blood of his first quarry.

2. Stalking game without dogs.

3. A small hunting dog.

of courage which had long since stopped being bravery and had become foolhardiness. He brought it with him one June and, timing them as if they were meeting an appointment with another human being, himself carrying the fyce with a sack over its head and Sam Fathers with a brace of the hounds on a rope leash, they lay downwind of the trail and actually ambushed the bear. They were so close that it turned at bay although he realised later this might have been from surprise and amazement at the shrill and frantic uproar of the fyce. It turned at bay against the trunk of a big cypress, on its hind feet; it seemed to the boy that it would never stop rising, taller and taller, and even the two hounds seemed to have taken a kind of desperate and despairing courage from the fyce. Then he realised that the fyce was actually not going to stop. He flung the gun down and ran. When he overtook and grasped the shrill, frantically pinwheeling little dog, it seemed to him that he was directly under the bear. He could smell it, strong and hot and rank. Sprawling, he looked up where it loomed and towered over him like a thunderclap. It was quite familiar, until he remembered: this was the way he had used to dream about it.

Then it was gone. He didn't see it go. He knelt, holding the frantic fyce with both hands, hearing the abased wailing of the two hounds drawing further and further away, until Sam came up, carrying the gun. He laid it quietly down beside the boy and stood looking down at him. "You've done seed him twice now, with a gun in your hands," he said. "This time you couldn't have missed him."

The boy rose. He still held the fyce. Even in his arms it continued to yap frantically, surging and straining toward the fading sound of the hounds like a collection of live-wire springs. The boy was panting a little. "Neither could you," he said. "You had the gun. Why didn't you shoot him?"

Sam didn't seem to have heard. He put out his hand and touched the little dog in the boy's arms which still yapped and strained even though the two hounds were out of hearing now. "He's done gone," Sam said. "You can slack off and rest now, until next time." He stroked the little dog until it began to grow quiet under his hand. "You's almost the one we wants," he said. "You just aint big enough. We aint got that one yet. He will need to be just a little bigger than smart, and a little braver than either." He withdrew his hand from the fyce's head and stood looking into the woods where the bear and the hounds had vanished. "Somebody is going to, some day."

"I know it," the boy said. "That's why it must be one of us. So it wont be until the last day. When even he dont want it to last any longer."

So he should have hated and feared Lion. It was in the fourth

summer, the fourth time he had made one in the celebration of Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthday. In the early spring Major de Spain's mare had foaled a horse colt. One evening when Sam brought the horses and mules up to stable them for the night, the colt was missing and it was all he could do to get the frantic mare into the lot. He had thought at first to let the mare lead him back to where she had become separated from the foal. But she would not do it. She would not even feint toward any particular part of the woods or even in any particular direction. She merely ran, as if she couldn't see, still frantic with terror. She whirled and ran at Sam once, as if to attack him in some ultimate desperation, as if she could not for the moment realise that he was a man and a long-familiar one. He got her into the lot at last. It was too dark by that time to back-track her, to unravel the erratic course she had doubtless pursued.

He came to the house and told Major de Spain. It was an animal, of course, a big one, and the colt was dead now, wherever it was. They all knew that. "It's a panther," General Compson said at once. "The same one. That doe and fawn last March." Sam had sent Major de Spain word of it when Boon Hogganbeck came to the camp on a routine visit to see how the stock had wintered—the doe's throat torn out, and the beast had run down the helpless fawn and killed it too.

"Sam never did say that was a panther," Major de Spain said. Sam said nothing now, standing behind Major de Spain where they sat at supper, inscrutable, as if he were just waiting for them to stop talking so he could go home. He didn't even seem to be looking at anything. "A panther might jump a doe, and he wouldn't have much trouble catching the fawn afterward. But no panther would have jumped that colt with the dam right there with it. It was Old Ben," Major de Spain said. "I'm disappointed in him. He has broken the rules. I didn't think he would have done that. He has killed mine and McCaslin's dogs, but that was all right. We gambled the dogs against him; we gave each other warning. But now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, out of season too. He broke the rules. It was Old Ben, Sam." Still Sam said nothing, standing there until Major de Spain should stop talking. "We'll back-track her tomorrow and see," Major de Spain said.

Sam departed. He would not live in the camp; he had built himself a little hut something like Joe Baker's, only stouter, tighter, on the bayou a quarter-mile away, and a stout log crib where he stored a little corn for the shoat he raised each year. The next morning he was waiting when they waked. He had already found the colt. They did not even wait for breakfast. It was not far, not five hundred yards from the stable—the three-months' colt lying on its side, its

throat torn out and the entrails and one ham partly eaten. It lay not as if it had been dropped but as if it had been struck and hurled, and no cat-mark, no claw-mark where a panther would have gripped it while finding its throat. They read the tracks where the frantic mare had circled and at last rushed in with that same ultimate desperation with which she had whirled on Sam Fathers yesterday evening, and the long tracks of dead and terrified running and those of the beast which had not even rushed at her when she advanced but had merely walked three or four paces toward her until she broke, and General Compson said, "Good God, what a wolf!"

Still Sam said nothing. The boy watched him while the men knelt, measuring the tracks. There was something in Sam's face now. It was neither exultation nor joy nor hope. Later, a man, the boy realised what it had been, and that Sam had known all the time what had made the tracks and what had torn the throat out of the doe in the spring and killed the fawn. It had been foreknowledge in Sam's face that morning. *And he was glad, he told himself. He was old. He had no children, no people, none of his blood anywhere above earth that he would ever meet again. And even if he were to, he could not have touched it, spoken to it, because for seventy years now he had had to be a negro. It was almost over now and he was glad.*

They returned to camp and had breakfast and came back with guns and the hounds. Afterwards the boy realised that they also should have known then what killed the colt as well as Sam Fathers did. But that was neither the first nor the last time he had seen men rationalise from and even act upon their misconceptions. After Boon, standing astride the colt, had whipped the dogs away from it with his belt, they snuffed at the tracks. One of them, a young dog hound without judgment yet, bayed once, and they ran for a few feet on what seemed to be a trail. Then they stopped, looking back at the men, eager enough, not baffled, merely questioning, as if they were asking "Now what?" Then they rushed back to the colt, where Boon, still astride it, slashed at them with the belt.

"I never knew a trail to get cold that quick," General Compson said.

"Maybe a single wolf big enough to kill a colt with the dam right there beside it dont leave scent," Major de Spain said.

"Maybe it was a hant,"<sup>4</sup> Walter Ewell said. He looked at Tennie's Jim. "Hah, Jim?"

Because the hounds would not run it, Major de Spain had Sam hunt out and find the tracks a hundred yards farther on and they put the dogs on it again and again the young one bayed and not one of them realised then that the hound was not baying like a dog striking

4. A ghost ("haunt").

game but was merely bellowing like a country dog whose yard has been invaded. General Compson spoke to the boy and Boon and Tennie's Jim: to the squirrel hunters. "You boys keep the dogs with you this morning. He's probably hanging around somewhere, waiting to get his breakfast off the colt. You might strike him."

But they did not. The boy remembered how Sam stood watching them as they went into the woods with the leashed hounds—the Indian face in which he had never seen anything until it smiled except that faint arching of the nostrils on that first morning when the hounds had found Old Ben. They took the hounds with them on the next day, though when they reached the place where they hoped to strike a fresh trail, the carcass of the colt was gone. Then on the third morning Sam was waiting again, this time until they had finished breakfast. He said, "Come." He led them to his house, his little hut, to the corn-crib beyond it. He had removed the corn and had made a deadfall of the door, baiting it with the colt's carcass; peering between the logs, they saw an animal almost the color of a gun or pistol barrel, what little time they had to examine its color or shape. It was not crouched nor even standing. It was in motion, in the air, coming toward them—a heavy body crashing with tremendous force against the door so that the thick door jumped and clattered in its frame, the animal, whatever it was, hurling itself against the door again seemingly before it could have touched the floor and got a new purchase to spring from. "Come away," Sam said, "fore he break his neck." Even when they retreated the heavy and measured crashes continued, the stout door jumping and clattering each time, and still no sound from the beast itself—no snarl, no cry.

"What in hell's name is it?" Major de Spain said.

"It's a dog," Sam said, his nostrils arching and collapsing faintly and steadily and that faint, fierce milkeness in his eyes again as on that first morning when the hounds had struck the old bear. "It's the dog."

"The dog?" Major de Spain said.

"That's gonter hold Old Ben."

"Dog the devil," Major de Spain said. "I'd rather have Old Ben himself in my pack than that brute. Shoot him."

"No," Sam said.

"You'll never tame him. How do you ever expect to make an animal like that afraid of you?"

"I dont want him tame," Sam said; again the boy watched his nostrils and the fierce milky light in his eyes. "But I almost rather he be tame than scared, of me or any man or any thing. But he wont be neither, of nothing."

"Then what are you going to do with it?"



"You can watch," Sam said.

Each morning through the second week they would go to Sam's crib. He had removed a few shingles from the roof and had put a rope on the colt's carcass and had drawn it out when the trap fell. Each morning they would watch him lower a pail of water into the crib while the dog hurled itself tirelessly against the door and dropped back and leaped again. It never made any sound and there was nothing frenzied in the act but only a cold and grim indomitable determination. Toward the end of the week it stopped jumping at the door. Yet it had not weakened appreciably and it was not as if it had rationalised the fact that the door was not going to give. It was as if for that time it simply disdained to jump any longer. It was not down. None of them had ever seen it down. It stood, and they could see it now—part mastiff, something of Airedale and something of a dozen other strains probably, better than thirty inches at the shoulders and weighing as they guessed almost ninety pounds, with cold yellow eyes and a tremendous chest and over all that strange color like a blued gun-barrel.

Then the two weeks were up. They prepared to break camp. The boy begged to remain and his cousin let him. He moved into the little hut with Sam Fathers. Each morning he watched Sam lower the pail of water into the crib. By the end of that week the dog was down. It would rise and half stagger, half crawl to the water and drink and collapse again. One morning it could not even reach the water, could not raise its forequarters even from the floor. Sam took a short stick and prepared to enter the crib. "Wait," the boy said. "Let me get the gun—"

"No," Sam said. "He can't move now." Nor could it. It lay on its side while Sam touched it, its head and the gaunted body, the dog lying motionless, the yellow eyes open. They were not fierce and there was nothing of petty malevolence in them, but a cold and almost impersonal malignance like some natural force. It was not even looking at Sam nor at the boy peering at it between the logs.

Sam began to feed it again. The first time he had to raise its head so it could lap the broth. That night he left a bowl of broth containing lumps of meat where the dog could reach it. The next morning the bowl was empty and the dog was lying on its belly, its head up, the cold yellow eyes watching the door as Sam entered, no change whatever in the cold yellow eyes and still no sound from it even when it sprang, its aim and co-ordination still bad from weakness so that Sam had time to strike it down with the stick and leap from the crib and slam the door as the dog, still without having had time to get its feet under it to jump again seemingly, hurled itself against the door as if the two weeks of starving had never been.

At noon that day someone came whooping through the woods from the direction of the camp. It was Boon. He came and looked for a while between the logs, at the tremendous dog lying again on its belly, its head up, the yellow eyes blinking sleepily at nothing: the indomitable and unbroken spirit. "What we better do," Boon said, "is to let that son of a bitch go and catch Old Ben and run him on the dog." He turned to the boy his weather-reddened and beetling face. "Get your traps together. Cass says for you to come on home. You been in here fooling with that horse-eating varmint long enough."

Boon had a borrowed mule at the camp; the buggy was waiting at the edge of the bottom. He was at home that night. He told McCaslin about it. "Sam's going to starve him again until he can go in and touch him. Then he will feed him again. Then he will starve him again, if he has to."

"But why?" McCaslin said. "What for? Even Sam will never tame that brute."

"We dont want him tame. We want him like he is. We just want him to find out at last that the only way he can get out of that crib and stay out of it is to do what Sam or somebody tells him to do. He's the dog that's going to stop Old Ben and hold him. We've already named him. His name is Lion."

Then November came at last. They returned to the camp. With General Compson and Major de Spain and his cousin and Walter and Boon he stood in the yard among the guns and bedding and boxes of food and watched Sam Fathers and Lion come up the lane from the lot—the Indian, the old man in battered overalls and rubber boots and a worn sheepskin coat and a hat which had belonged to the boy's father; the tremendous dog pacing gravely beside him. The hounds rushed out to meet them and stopped, except the young one which still had but little of judgment. It ran up to Lion, fawning. Lion didn't snap at it. He didn't even pause. He struck it rolling and yelping for five or six feet with a blow of one paw as a bear would have done and came on into the yard and stood, blinking sleepily at nothing, looking at no one, while Boon said, "Jesus. Jesus.—Will he let me touch him?"

"You can touch him," Sam said. "He dont care. He dont care about nothing or nobody."

The boy watched that too. He watched it for the next two years from that moment when Boon touched Lion's head and then knelt beside him, feeling the bones and muscles, the power. It was as if Lion were a woman—or perhaps Boon was the woman. That was more like it—the big, grave, sleepy-seeming dog which, as Sam Fathers said, cared about no man and no thing; and the violent, insensitive, hard-faced man with his touch of remote Indian blood

and the mind almost of a child. He watched Boon take over Lion's feeding from Sam and Uncle Ash both. He would see Boon squatting in the cold rain beside the kitchen while Lion ate. Because Lion neither slept nor ate with the other dogs though none of them knew where he did sleep until in the second November, thinking until then that Lion slept in his kennel beside Sam Fathers' hut, when the boy's cousin McCaslin said something about it to Sam by sheer chance and Sam told him. And that night the boy and Major de Spain and McCaslin with a lamp entered the back room where Boon slept—the little, tight, airless room rank with the smell of Boon's unwashed body and his wet hunting-clothes—where Boon, snoring on his back, choked and waked and Lion raised his head beside him and looked back at them from his cold, slumbrous yellow eyes.

"Damn it, Boon," McCaslin said. "Get that dog out of here. He's got to run Old Ben tomorrow morning. How in hell do you expect him to smell anything fainter than a skunk after breathing you all night?"

"The way I smell aint hurt my nose none that I ever noticed," Boon said.

"It wouldn't matter if it had," Major de Spain said. "We're not depending on you to trail a bear. Put him outside. Put him under the house with the other dogs."

Boon began to get up. "He'll kill the first one that happens to yawn or sneeze in his face or touches him."

"I reckon not," Major de Spain said. "None of them are going to risk yawning in his face or touching him either, even asleep. Put him outside. I want his nose right tomorrow. Old Ben fooled him last year. I dont think he will do it again."

Boon put on his shoes without lacing them; in his long soiled underwear, his hair still tousled from sleep, he and Lion went out. The others returned to the front room and the poker game where McCaslin's and Major de Spain's hands waited for them on the table. After a while McCaslin said, "Do you want me to go back and look again?"

"No," Major de Spain said. "I call," he said to Walter Ewell. He spoke to McCaslin again. "If you do, dont tell me. I am beginning to see the first sign of my increasing age: I dont like to know that my orders have been disobeyed, even when I knew when I gave them that they would be.—A small pair," he said to Walter Ewell.

"How small?" Walter said.

"Very small," Major de Spain said.

And the boy, lying beneath his piled quilts and blankets waiting for sleep, knew likewise that Lion was already back in Boon's bed,

for the rest of that night and the next one and during all the nights of the next November and the next one. He thought then: *I wonder what Sam thinks. He could have Lion with him, even if Boon is a white man. He could ask Major or McCaslin either. And more than that. It was Sam's hand that touched Lion first and Lion knows it.* Then he became a man and he knew that too. It had been all right. That was the way it should have been. Sam was the chief, the prince; Boon, the plebeian, was his huntsman. Boon should have nursed the dogs.

On the first morning that Lion led the pack after Old Ben, seven strangers appeared in the camp. They were swamper: gaunt, malaria-ridden men appearing from nowhere, who ran trap-lines for coons or perhaps farmed little patches of cotton and corn along the edge of the bottom, in clothes but little better than Sam Fathers' and nowhere near as good as Tennie's Jim's, with worn shotguns and rifles, already squatting patiently in the cold drizzle in the side yard when day broke. They had a spokesman; afterward Sam Fathers told Major de Spain how all during the past summer and fall they had drifted into the camp singly or in pairs and threes, to look quietly at Lion for a while and then go away: "Mawnin, Major. We heerd you was aimin to put that ere blue dawg on that old two-toed bear this mawnin. We figgered we'd come up and watch, if you dont mind. We wont do no shooting, lessen he runs over us."

"You are welcome," Major de Spain said. "You are welcome to shoot. He's more your bear than ours."

"I reckon that aint no lie. I done fed him enough cawn to have a sheer in him. Not to mention a shoat three years ago."

"I reckon I got a sheer too," another said. "Only it aint in the bear." Major de Spain looked at him. He was chewing tobacco. He spat. "Hit was a heifer calf. Nicc un too. Last year. When I finally found her, I reckon she looked about like that colt of yourn looked last June."

"Oh," Major de Spain said. "Be welcome. If you see game in front of my dogs, shoot it."

Nobody shot Old Ben that day. No man saw him. The dogs jumped him within a hundred yards of the glade where the boy had seen him that day in the summer of his eleventh year. The boy was less than a quarter-mile away. He heard the jump but he could distinguish no voice among the dogs that he did not know and therefore would be Lion's, and he thought, believed, that Lion was not among them. Even the fact that they were going much faster than he had ever heard them run behind Old Ben before and that the high thin note of hysteria was missing now from their voices was not enough to disabuse him. He didn't comprehend until that night, when Sam told him that Lion would never cry on a trail.

"He gonter growl when he catches Old Ben's throat," Sam said. "But he aint gonter never holler, no more than he ever done when he was jumping at that two-inch door. It's that blue dog in him. What you call it?"

"Aircdale," the boy said.

Lion was there; the jump was just too close to the river. When Boon returned with Lion about eleven that night, he swore that Lion had stopped Old Ben once but that the hounds would not go in and Old Ben broke away and took to the river and swam for miles down it and he and Lion went down one bank for about ten miles and crossed and came up the other but it had begun to get dark before they struck any trail where Old Ben had come up out of the water, unless he was still in the water when he passed the ford where they crossed. Then he fell to cursing the hounds and ate the supper Uncle Ash had saved for him and went off to bed and after a while the boy opened the door of the little stale room thunderous with snoring and the great grave dog raised its head from Boon's pillow and blinked at him for a moment and lowered its head again.

When the next November came and the last day, the day on which it was now becoming traditional to save for Old Ben, there were more than a dozen strangers waiting. They were not all swampers this time. Some of them were townsmen, from other county seats like Jefferson, who had heard about Lion and Old Ben and had come to watch the great blue dog keep his yearly rendezvous with the old two-toed bear. Some of them didn't even have guns and the hunting-clothes and boots they wore had been on a store shelf yesterday.

This time Lion jumped Old Ben more than five miles from the river and bayed and held him and this time the hounds went in, in a sort of desperate emulation. The boy heard them; he was that near. He heard Boon whooping; he heard the two shots when General Compson delivered both barrels, one containing five buckshot, the other a single ball, into the bear from as close as he could force his almost unmanageable horse. He heard the dogs when the bear broke free again. He was running now; panting, stumbling, his lungs bursting, he reached the place where General Compson had fired and where Old Ben had killed two of the hounds. He saw the blood from General Compson's shots, but he could go no further. He stopped, leaning against a tree for his breathing to ease and his heart to slow, hearing the sound of the dogs as it faded on and died away.

In camp that night—they had as guests five of the still terrified strangers in new hunting coats and boots who had been lost all day until Sam Fathers went out and got them—he heard the rest of it:

how Lion had stopped and held the bear again but only the one-eyed mule which did not mind the smell of wild blood would approach and Boon was riding the mule and Boon had never been known to hit anything. He shot at the bear five times with his pump gun,<sup>5</sup> touching nothing, and Old Ben killed another hound and broke free once more and reached the river and was gone. Again Boon and Lion hunted as far down one bank as they dared. Too far; they crossed in the first of dusk and dark overtook them within a mile. And this time Lion found the broken trail, the blood perhaps, in the darkness where Old Ben had come up out of the water, but Boon had him on a rope, luckily, and he got down from the mule and fought Lion hand-to-hand until he got him back to camp. This time Boon didn't even curse. He stood in the door, muddy, spent, his huge gargoyle's face tragic and still amazed. "I missed him," he said. "I was in twenty-five feet of him and I missed him five times."

"But we have drawn blood," Major de Spain said. "General Compson drew blood. We have never done that before."

"But I missed him," Boon said. "I missed him five times. With Lion looking right at me."

"Never mind," Major de Spain said. "It was a damned fine race. And we drew blood. Next year we'll let General Compson or Walter ride Katie, and we'll get him."

Then McCaslin said, "Where is Lion, Boon?"

"I left him at Sam's," Boon said. He was already turning away. "I aint fit to sleep with him."

So he should have hated and feared Lion. Yet he did not. It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too.

### III

It was December. It was the coldest December he had ever remembered. They had been in camp four days over two weeks, waiting for the weather to soften so that Lion and Old Ben could run their yearly race. Then they would break camp and go home. Because of these unforeseen additional days which they had had to pass waiting on the weather, with nothing to do but play poker, the whisky had given out and he and Boon were being sent to Memphis with a suitcase and a note from Major de Spain to Mr. Semmes, the distiller, to get more. That is, Major de Spain and McCaslin were sending Boon to get the whisky and sending him

5. A repeater operated by a sliding hand grip.

to see that Boon got back with it or most of it or at least some of it.

Tennie's Jim waked him at three. He dressed rapidly, shivering, not so much from the cold because a fresh fire already boomed and roared on the hearth, but in that dead winter hour when the blood and the heart are slow and sleep is incomplete. He crossed the gap between house and kitchen, the gap of iron earth beneath the brilliant and rigid night where dawn would not begin for three hours yet, tasting, tongue palate and to the very bottom of his lungs the searing dark, and entered the kitchen, the lamp-lit warmth where the stove glowed, fogging the windows, and where Boon already sat at the table at breakfast, hunched over his plate, almost in his plate, his working jaws blue with stubble and his face innocent of water and his coarse, horse-mane hair innocent of comb—the quarter Indian, grandson of a Chickasaw squaw, who on occasion resented with his hard and furious fists the intimation of one single drop of alien blood and on others, usually after whisky, affirmed with the same fists and the same fury that his father had been the full-blood Chickasaw and even a chief and that even his mother had been only half white. He was four inches over six feet; he had the mind of a child, the heart of a horse, and little hard shoe-button eyes without depth or meanness or generosity or viciousness or gentleness or anything else, in the ugliest face the boy had ever seen. It looked like somebody had found a walnut a little larger than a football and with a machinist's hammer had shaped features into it and then painted it, mostly red; not Indian red but a fine bright ruddy color which whisky might have had something to do with but which was mostly just happy and violent out-of-doors, the wrinkles in it not the residue of the forty years it had survived but from squinting into the sun or into the gloom of cane-brakes where game had run, baked into it by the camp fires before which he had lain trying to sleep on the cold November or December ground while waiting for daylight so he could rise and hunt again, as though time were merely something he walked through as he did through air, aging him no more than air did. He was brave, faithful, improvident and unreliable; he had neither profession job nor trade and owned one vice and one virtue: whisky, and that absolute and unquestioning fidelity to Major de Spain and the boy's cousin McCaslin. "Sometimes I'd call them both virtues," Major de Spain said once. "Or both vices," McCaslin said.

He ate his breakfast, hearing the dogs under the kitchen, wakened by the smell of frying meat or perhaps by the feet overhead. He heard Lion once, short and peremptory, as the best hunter in any camp has only to speak once to all save the fools, and none other of Major de Spain's and McCaslin's dogs were Lion's equal in size and strength and perhaps even in courage, but they were not fools;

Old Ben had killed the last fool among them last year.

Tennie's Jim came in as they finished. The wagon was outside. Ash decided he would drive them over to the log-line where they would flag the outbound log-train and let Tennie's Jim wash the dishes. The boy knew why. It would not be the first time he had listened to old Ash badgering Boon.

It was cold. The wagon wheels banged and clattered on the frozen ground; the sky was fixed and brilliant. He was not shivering, he was shaking, slow and steady and hard, the food he had just eaten still warm and solid inside him while his outside shook slow and steady around it as though his stomach floated loose. "They wont run this morning," he said. "No dog will have any nose today."

"Cep Lion," Ash said. "Lion dont need no nose. All he need is a bear." He had wrapped his feet in towsacks and he had a quilt from his pallet bed on the kitchen floor drawn over his head and wrapped around him until in the thin brilliant starlight he looked like nothing at all that the boy had ever seen before. "He run a bear through a thousand-acre ice-house. Catch him too. Them other dogs dont matter because they aint going to keep up with Lion nohow, long as he got a bear in front of him."

"What's wrong with the other dogs?" Boon said. "What the hell do you know about it anyway? This is the first time you've had your tail out of that kitchen since we got here except to chop a little wood."

"Aint nothing wrong with them," Ash said. "And long as it's left up to them, aint nothing going to be. I just wish I had knowed all my life how to take care of my health good as them hounds knows."

"Well, they aint going to run this morning," Boon said. His voice was harsh and positive. "Major promised they wouldn't until me and Ike get back."

"Weather gonter break today. Gonter soft up. Rain by night." Then Ash laughed, chuckled, somewhere inside the quilt which concealed even his face. "Hum up here, mules!" he said, jerking the reins so that the mules leaped forward and snatched the lurching and banging wagon for several feet before they slowed again into their quick, short-paced, rapid plodding. "Sides, I like to know why Major need to wait on you. It's Lion he aiming to use. I aint never heard tell of you bringing no bear nor no other kind of meat into this camp."

Now Boon's going to curse Ash or maybe even hit him, the boy thought. But Boon never did, never had; the boy knew he never would even though four years ago Boon had shot five times with a borrowed pistol at a negro on the street in Jefferson, with the



same result as when he had shot five times at Old Ben last fall. "By God," Boon said, "he aint going to put Lion or no other dog on nothing until I get back tonight. Because he promised me. Whip up them mules and keep them whipped up. Do you want me to freeze to death?"

They reached the log-line<sup>6</sup> and built a fire. After a while the log-train came up out of the woods under the paling east and Boon flagged it. Then in the warm caboose the boy slept again while Boon and the conductor and brakeman talked about Lion and Old Ben as people later would talk about Sullivan and Kilrain and, later still, about Dempsey and Tunney.<sup>7</sup> Dozing, swaying as the springless caboose lurched and clattered, he would hear them still talking, about the shoats and calves Old Ben had killed and the cribs he had rifled and the traps and deadfalls he had wrecked and the lead he probably carried under his hide—Old Ben, the two-toed bear in a land where bears with trap-ruined feet had been called Two-Toe or Three-Toe or Cripple-Foot for fifty years, only Old Ben was an extra bear (the head bear, General Compson called him) and so had earned a name such as a human man could have worn and not been sorry.

They reached Hoke's at sunup. They emerged from the warm caboose in their hunting clothes, the muddy boots and stained khaki and Boon's blue unshaven jowls. But that was all right. Hoke's was a sawmill and commissary and two stores and a loading-chute on a sidetrack from the main line, and all the men in it wore boots and khaki too. Presently the Memphis train came. Boon bought three packages of popcorn-and-molasses and a bottle of beer from the news butch and the boy went to sleep again to the sound of his chewing.

But in Memphis it was not all right. It was as if the high buildings and the hard pavements, the fine carriages and the horse cars and the men in starched collars and neckties made their boots and khaki look a little rougher and a little muddier and made Boon's beard look worse and more unshaven and his face look more and more like he should never have brought it out of the woods at all or at least out of reach of Major de Spain or McCaslin or someone who knew it and could have said, "Dont be afraid. He wont hurt you." He walked through the station, on the slick floor, his face moving as he worked the popcorn out of his teeth with his tongue, his legs spraddled and stiff in the hips as if he were walking on buttered glass, and that blue stubble on his face like the filings from a new gun-barrel. They passed the first saloon. Even through the closed

6. The railroad line of the timber company, probably narrow-gauge.

7. American heavyweight boxing champions. John L. Sullivan defeated Jack

Kilrain in 1889; Gene Tunney defeated Jack Dempsey in 1926 and again in 1927.

doors the boy could seem to smell the sawdust and the reek of old drink. Boon began to cough. He coughed for something less than a minute. "Damn this cold," he said. "I'd sure like to know where I got it."

"Back there in the station," the boy said.

Boon had started to cough again. He stopped. He looked at the boy. "What?" he said.

"You never had it when we left camp nor on the train either." Boon looked at him, blinking. Then he stopped blinking. He didn't cough again. He said quietly:

"Lend me a dollar. Come on. You've got it. If you ever had one, you've still got it. I don't mean you are tight with your money because you ain't. You just don't never seem to ever think of nothing you want. When I was sixteen a dollar bill melted off of me before I even had time to read the name of the bank that issued it." He said quietly: "Let me have a dollar, Ike."

"You promised Major. You promised McCaslin. Not till we get back to camp."

"All right," Boon said in that quiet and patient voice. "What can I do on just one dollar? You ain't going to lend me another."

"You're damn right I ain't," the boy said, his voice quiet too, cold with rage which was not at Boon, remembering: Boon snoring in a hard chair in the kitchen so he could watch the clock and wake him and McCaslin and drive them the seventeen miles in to Jefferson to catch the train to Memphis; the wild, never-bridled Texas paint pony<sup>8</sup> which he had persuaded McCaslin to let him buy and which he and Boon had bought at auction for four dollars and seventy-five cents and fetched home wired between two gentle old mares with pieces of barbed wire and which had never even seen shelled corn before and didn't even know what it was unless the grains were bugs maybe and at last (he was ten and Boon had been ten all his life) Boon said the pony was gentled and with a tow sack over its head and four negroes to hold it they backed it into an old two-wheeled cart and hooked up the gear and he and Boon got up and Boon said, "All right, boys. Let him go" and one of the negroes—it was Tennie's Jim—snatched the tow sack off and leaped for his life and they lost the first wheel against a post of the open gate only at that moment Boon caught him by the scruff of the neck and flung him into the roadside ditch so he only saw the rest of it in fragments: the other wheel as it slammed through the side gate and crossed the back yard and leaped up onto the gallery and scraps of the cart here and there along the road and Boon vanishing rapidly on his stomach in the leaping and spurting dust and still holding the reins until they broke too and two days later they finally

8. Texas "pinto" (Spanish for "painted"); *i.e.*, a spotted horse.

caught the pony seven miles away still wearing the hames and the headstall of the bridle around its neck like a duchess with two necklaces at one time. He gave Boon the dollar.

"All right," Boon said. "Come on in out of the cold."

"I aint cold," he said.

"You can have some lemonade."

"I dont want any lemonade."

The door closed behind him. The sun was well up now. It was a brilliant day, though Ash had said it would rain before night. Already it was warmer; they could run tomorrow. He felt the old lift of the heart, as pristine as ever, as on the first day; he would never lose it, no matter how old in hunting and pursuit: the best, the best of all breathing, the humility and the pride. He must stop thinking about it. Already it seemed to him that he was running, back to the station, to the tracks themselves: the first train going south, he must stop thinking about it. The street was busy. He watched the big Norman draft horses, the Percherons; the trim carriages from which the men in the fine overcoats and the ladies rosy in furs descended and entered the station. (They were still next door to it but one.) Twenty years ago his father had ridden into Memphis as a member of Colonel Sartoris' horse in Forrest's<sup>9</sup> command, up Main street and (the tale told) into the lobby of the Gayoso Hotel where the Yankee officers sat in the leather chairs spitting into the tall bright cuspidors and then out again, scot-free—

The door opened behind him. Boon was wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. "All right," he said. "Let's go tend to it and get the hell out of here."

They went and had the suitcase packed. He never knew where or when Boon got the other bottle. Doubtless Mr. Semmes gave it to him. When they reached Hoke's again at sundown, it was empty. They could get a return train to Hoke's in two hours; they went straight back to the station as Major de Spain and then McCaslin had told Boon to do and then ordered him to do and had sent the boy along to see that he did. Boon took the first drink from his bottle in the wash room. A man in a uniform cap came to tell him he couldn't drink there and looked at Boon's face once and said nothing. The next time he was pouring into his water glass beneath the edge of a table in the restaurant when the manager (she was a woman) did tell him he couldn't drink there and he went back to the washroom. He had been telling the negro waiter and all the other people in the restaurant who couldn't help but hear him and who had never heard of Lion and didn't want to, about Lion and Old Ben. Then he happened to think of the zoo. He had found out that there was another train to Hoke's at three oclock and so they

9. General Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821-1877), Confederate cavalryman.

would spend the time at the zoo and take the three oclock train until he came back from the washroom for the third time. Then they would take the first train back to camp, get Lion and come back to the zoo where, he said, the bears were fed on ice cream and lady fingers and he would match Lion against them all.

So they missed the first train, the one they were supposed to take, but he got Boon onto the three oclock train and they were all right again, with Boon not even going to the wash-room now but drinking in the aisle and talking about Lion and the men he buttonholed no more daring to tell Boon he couldn't drink there than the man in the station had dared.

When they reached Hoke's at sundown, Boon was asleep. The boy waked him at last and got him and the suitcase off the train and he even persuaded him to eat some supper at the sawmill commissary. So he was all right when they got in the caboose of the log-train to go back into the woods, with the sun going down red and the sky already overcast and the ground would not freeze tonight. It was the boy who slept now, sitting behind the ruby stove while the springless caboose jumped and clattered and Boon and the brakeman and the conductor talked about Lion and Old Ben because they knew what Boon was talking about because this was home. "Overcast and already thawing," Boon said. "Lion will get him tomorrow."

It would have to be Lion, or somebody. It would not be Boon. He had never hit anything bigger than a squirrel that anybody ever knew, except the negro woman that day when he was shooting at the negro man. He was a big negro and not ten feet away but Boon shot five times with the pistol he had borrowed from Major de Spain's negro coachman and the negro he was shooting at outed with a dollar-and-a-half mail-order pistol and would have burned Boon down with it only it never went off, it just went snick-snick-snick-snick five times and Boon still blasting away and he broke a plate-glass window that cost McCaslin forty-five dollars and hit a negro woman who happened to be passing in the leg only Major de Spain paid for that; he and McCaslin cut cards, the plate-glass window against the negro woman's leg. And the first day on stand this year, the first morning in camp, the buck ran right over Boon; he heard Boon's old pump gun go whow. whow. whow. whow. whow. and then his voice: "God damn, here he comes! Head him! Head him!" and when he got there the buck's tracks and the five exploded shells were not twenty paces apart.

There were five guests in camp that night from Jefferson: Mr. Bayard Sartoris<sup>1</sup> and his son and General Compson's son and two others. And the next morning he looked out the window, into the

1. Bayard Sartoris, then a young banker in Jefferson, becomes the county's most influential citizen after the death of

Major de Spain. See the novels *Sartoris* (1929) and *The Unvanquished* (1938).

gray thin drizzle of daybreak which Ash had predicted, and there they were, standing and squatting beneath the thin rain, almost two dozen of them who had fed Old Ben corn and shoats and even calves for ten years, in their worn hats and hunting coats and overalls which any town negro would have thrown away or burned and only the rubber boots strong and sound, and the worn and blueless<sup>2</sup> guns, and some even without guns. While they ate breakfast a dozen more arrived, mounted and on foot: loggers from the camp thirteen miles below and sawmill men from Hoke's and the only gun among them that one which the log-train conductor carried: so that when they went into the woods this morning Major de Spain led a party almost as strong, excepting that some of them were not armed, as some he had led in the last darkening days of '64 and '65. The little yard would not hold them. They overflowed it, into the lane where Major de Spain sat his mare while Ash in his dirty apron thrust the greasy cartridges into his carbine and passed it up to him and the great grave blue dog stood at his stirrup not as a dog stands but as a horse stands, blinking his sleepy topaz eyes at nothing, deaf even to the yelling of the hounds which Boon and Tennie's Jim held on leash.

"We'll put General Compson on Katie this morning," Major de Spain said. "He drew blood last year; if he'd had a mule then that would have stood, he would have—"

"No," General Compson said. "I'm too old to go helling through the woods on a mule or a horse or anything else any more. Besides, I had my chance last year and missed it. I'm going on a stand this morning. I'm going to let that boy ride Katie."

"No, wait," McCaslin said. "Ike's got the rest of his life to hunt bears in. Let somebody else—"

"No," General Compson said. "I want Ike to ride Katie. He's already a better woodsman than you or me either and in another ten years he'll be as good as Walter."

At first he couldn't believe it, not until Major de Spain spoke to him. Then he was up, on the one-eyed mule which would not spook at wild blood, looking down at the dog motionless at Major de Spain's stirrup, looking in the gray streaming light bigger than a calf, bigger than he knew it actually was—the big head, the chest almost as big as his own, the blue hide beneath which the muscles flinched or quivered to no touch since the heart which drove blood to them loved no man and no thing, standing as a horse stands yet different from a horse which infers only weight and speed while Lion inferred not only courage and all else that went to make up the will and desire to pursue and kill, but endurance, the will and desire to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh in order to overtake

2. As a gun barrel ages with use, the steel loses its blue coating.

and slay. Then the dog looked at him. It moved its head and looked at him across the trivial uproar of the hounds, out of the yellow eyes as depthless as Boon's, as free as Boon's of meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness. They were just cold and sleepy. Then it blinked, and he knew it was not looking at him and never had been, without even bothering to turn its head away.

That morning he heard the first cry. Lion had already vanished while Sam and Tennie's Jim were putting saddles on the mule and horse which had drawn the wagon and he watched the hounds as they crossed and cast, snuffing and whimpering, until they too disappeared. Then he and Major de Spain and Sam and Tennie's Jim rode after them and heard the first cry out of the wet and thawing woods not two hundred yards ahead, high, with that abject, almost human quality he had come to know, and the other hounds joining in until the gloomed woods rang and clamored. They rode then. It seemed to him that he could actually see the big blue dog boring on, silent, and the bear too: the thick, locomotive-like shape which he had seen that day four years ago crossing the blow-down, crashing on ahead of the dogs faster than he had believed it could have moved, drawing away even from the running mules. He heard a shot-gun, once. The woods had opened, they were going fast, the clamor faint and fading on ahead; they passed the man who had fired—a swamper, a pointing arm, a gaunt face, the small black orifice of his yelling studded with rotten teeth.

He heard the changed note in the hounds' uproar and two hundred yards ahead he saw them. The bear had turned. He saw Lion drive in without pausing and saw the bear strike him aside and lunge into the yelling hounds and kill one of them almost in its tracks and whirl and run again. Then they were in a streaming tide of dogs. He heard Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim shouting and the pistol sound of Tennie's Jim's leather thong as he tried to turn them. Then he and Sam Fathers were riding alone. One of the hounds had kept on with Lion though. He recognised its voice. It was the young hound which even a year ago had had no judgment and which, by the lights of the other hounds anyway, still had none. *Maybe that's what courage is*, he thought. "Right," Sam said behind him. "Right. We got to turn him from the river if we can."

Now they were in cane: a brake. He knew the path through it as well as Sam did. They came out of the undergrowth and struck the entrance almost exactly. It would traverse the brake and come out onto a high open ridge above the river. He heard the flat clap of Walter Ewell's rifle, then two more. "No," Sam said. "I can hear the hound. Go on."

They emerged from the narrow roofless tunnel of snapping and hissing cane, still galloping, onto the open ridge below which the

thick yellow river,<sup>3</sup> reflectionless in the gray and streaming light, seemed not to move. Now he could hear the hound too. It was not running. The cry was a high frantic yapping and Boon was running along the edge of the bluff, his old gun leaping and jouncing against his back on its sling made of a piece of cotton plow-line. He whirled and ran up to them, wild-faced, and flung himself onto the mule behind the boy. "That damn boat!" he cried. "It's on the other side! He went straight across! Lion was too close to him! That little hound too! Lion was so close I couldn't shoot! Go on!" he cried, beating his heels into the mule's flanks. "Go on!"

They plunged down the bank, slipping and sliding in the thawed earth, crashing through the willows and into the water. He felt no shock, no cold, he on one side of the swimming mule, grasping the pommel with one hand and holding his gun above the water with the other, Boon opposite him. Sam was behind them somewhere, and then the river, the water about them, was full of dogs. They swam faster than the mules; they were scrambling up the bank before the mules touched bottom. Major de Spain was whooping from the bank they had just left and, looking back, he saw Tennie's Jim and the horse as they went into the water.

Now the woods ahead of them and the rain-heavy air were one uproar. It rang and clamored; it echoed and broke against the bank behind them and reformed and clamored and rang until it seemed to the boy that all the hounds which had ever bayed game in this land were yelling down at him. He got his leg over the mule as it came up out of the water. Boon didn't try to mount again. He grasped one stirrup as they went up the bank and crashed through the undergrowth which fringed the bluff and saw the bear, on its hind feet, its back against a tree while the bellowing hounds swirled around it and once more Lion drove in, leaping clear of the ground.

This time the bear didn't strike him down. It caught the dog in both arms, almost loverlike, and they both went down. He was off the mule now. He drew back both hammers of the gun but he could see nothing but moiling spotted houndbodies until the bear surged up again. Boon was yelling something, he could not tell what; he could see Lion still clinging to the bear's throat and he saw the bear, half erect, strike one of the hounds with one paw and hurl it five or six feet and then, rising and rising as though it would never stop, stand erect again and begin to rake at Lion's belly with its forepaws. Then Boon was running. The boy saw the gleam of the blade in his hand and watched him leap among the hounds, hurdling them, kicking them aside as he ran, and fling himself astride the bear as he had hurled himself onto the mule, his legs locked around

3. The hunting camp is on the Tallahatchie River, in the northeast corner of the county.

the bear's belly, his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung, and the glint of the knife as it rose and fell.

It fell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade. Then they went down, pulled over backward by Boon's weight, Boon underneath. It was the bear's back which reappeared first but at once Boon was astride it again. He had never released the knife and again the boy saw the almost infinitesimal movement of his arm and shoulder as he probed and sought; then the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps toward the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.

He and Tennie's Jim ran forward. Boon was kneeling at the bear's head. His left ear was shredded, his left coat sleeve was completely gone, his right boot had been ripped from knee to instep; the bright blood thinned in the thin rain down his leg and hand and arm and down the side of his face which was no longer wild but was quite calm. Together they prized Lion's jaws from the bear's throat. "Easy, goddamn it," Boon said. "Cant you see his guts are all out of him?" He began to remove his coat. He spoke to Tennie's Jim in that calm voice: "Bring the boat up. It's about a hundred yards down the bank there. I saw it." Tennie's Jim rose and went away. Then, and he could not remember if it had been a call or an exclamation from Tennie's Jim or if he had glanced up by chance, he saw Tennie's Jim stooping and saw Sam Fathers lying motionless on his face in the trampled mud.

The mule had not thrown him. He remembered that Sam was down too even before Boon began to run. There was no mark on him whatever and when he and Boon turned him over, his eyes were open and he said something in that tongue which he and Joe Baker had used to speak<sup>4</sup> together. But he couldn't move. Tennie's Jim brought the skiff up; they could hear him shouting to Major de Spain across the river. Boon wrapped Lion in his hunting coat and carried him down to the skiff and they carried Sam down and returned and hitched the bear to the one-eyed mule's saddle-bow with Tennie's Jim's leash-thong and dragged him down to the skiff and got him into it and left Tennie's Jim to swim the horse and the two mules back across. Major de Spain caught the bow of the skiff as Boon jumped out and past him before it touched the bank. He looked at Old Ben and said quietly: "Well." Then he walked into the water and leaned down and touched Sam and Sam looked

4. That is, the Indian dialect of his childhood.



up at him and said something in that old tongue he and Joe Baker spoke. "You dont know what happened?" Major de Spain said.

"No, sir," the boy<sup>s</sup> said. "It wasn't the mule. It wasn't anything. He was off the mule when Boon ran in on the bear. Then we looked up and he was lying on the ground." Boon was shouting at Tennie's Jim, still in the middle of the river.

"Come on, gaddamn it!" he said. "Bring me that mule!"

"What do you want with a mule?" Major de Spain said.

Boon didn't even look at him. "I'm going to Hoke's to get the doctor," he said in that calm voice, his face quite calm beneath the steady thinning of the bright blood.

"You need a doctor yourself," Major de Spain said. "Tennie's Jim—"

"Damn that," Boon said. He turned on Major de Spain. His face was still calm, only his voice was a pitch higher. "Cant you see his goddamn guts are all out of him?"

"Boon!" Major de Spain said. They looked at one another. Boon was a good head taller than Major de Spain; even the boy was taller now than Major de Spain.

"I've got to get the doctor," Boon said. "His goddamn guts—"

"All right," Major de Spain said. Tennie's Jim came up out of the water. The horse and the sound mule had already scented Old Ben; they surged and plunged all the way up to the top of the bluff, dragging Tennie's Jim with them, before he could stop them and tie them and come back. Major de Spain unlooped the leather thong of his compass from his buttonhole and gave it to Tennie's Jim. "Go straight to Hoke's," he said. "Bring Doctor Crawford back with you. Tell him there are two men to be looked at. Take my marc. Can you find the road from here?"

"Yes, sir," Tennie's Jim said.

"All right," Major de Spain said. "Go on." He turned to the boy. "Take the mules and the horse and go back and get the wagon. We'll go on down the river in the boat to Coon bridge. Meet us there. Can you find it again?"

"Yes, sir," the boy said.

"All right. Get started."

He went back to the wagon. He realised then how far they had run. It was already afternoon when he put the mules into the traces and tied the horse's lead-rope to the tail-gate. He reached Coon bridge at dusk. The skiff was already there. Before he could see it and almost before he could see the water he had to leap from the tilting wagon, still holding the reins, and work around to where he could grasp the bit and then the ear of the plunging sound mule and dig his heels and hold it until Boon came up the bank.

The rope of the led horse had already snapped and it had already disappeared up the road toward camp. They turned the wagon around and took the mules out and he led the sound mule a hundred yards up the road and tied it. Boon had already brought Lion up to the wagon and Sam was sitting up in the skiff now and when they raised him he tried to walk, up the bank and to the wagon and he tried to climb into the wagon but Boon did not wait; he picked Sam up bodily and set him on the seat. Then they hitched Old Ben to the one-eyed mule's saddle again and dragged him up the bank and set two skid-poles into the open tail-gate and got him into the wagon and he went and got the sound mule and Boon fought it into the traces, striking it across its hard hollow-sounding face until it came into position and stood trembling. Then the rain came down, as though it had held off all day waiting on them.

They returned to camp through it, through the streaming and sightless dark, hearing long before they saw any light the horn and the spaced shots to guide them. When they came to Sam's dark little hut he tried to stand up. He spoke again in the tongue of the old fathers; then he said clearly: "Let me out. Let me out."

"He hasn't got any fire," Major said. "Go on!" he said sharply.

But Sam was struggling now, trying to stand up. "Let me out, master," he said. "Let me go home."

So he stopped the wagon and Boon got down and lifted Sam out. He did not wait to let Sam try to walk this time. He carried him into the hut and Major de Spain got light on a paper spill from the buried embers on the hearth and lit the lamp and Boon put Sam on his bunk and drew off his boots and Major de Spain covered him and the boy was not there, he was holding the mules, the sound one which was trying again to bolt since when the wagon stopped Old Ben's scent drifted forward again along the streaming blackness of air, but Sam's eyes were probably open again on that profound look which saw further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog. Then they went on, toward the long wailing of the horn and the shots which seemed each to linger intact somewhere in the thick streaming air until the next spaced report joined and blended with it, to the lighted house, the bright streaming windows, the quiet faces as Boon entered, bloody and quite calm, carrying the bundled coat. He laid Lion, blood coat and all, on his stale sheetless pallet bed which not even Ash, as deft in the house as a woman, could ever make smooth.

The sawmill doctor from Hoke's was already there. Boon would not let the doctor touch him until he had seen to Lion. He wouldn't risk giving Lion chloroform. He put the entrails back and sewed him up without it while Major de Spain held his head and Boon his feet. But he never tried to move. He lay there, the yellow eyes

open upon nothing while the quiet men in the new hunting clothes and in the old ones crowded into the little airless room rank with the smell of Boon's body and garments, and watched. Then the doctor cleaned and disinfected Boon's face and arm and leg and bandaged them and, the boy in front with a lantern and the doctor and McCaslin and Major de Spain and General Compson following, they went to Sam Fathers' hut. Tennie's Jim had built up the fire; he squatted before it, dozing. Sam had not moved since Boon had put him in the bunk and Major de Spain had covered him with the blankets, yet he opened his eyes and looked from one to another of the faces and when McCaslin touched his shoulder and said, "Sam. The doctor wants to look at you," he even drew his hands out of the blanket and began to fumble at his shirt buttons until McCaslin said, "Wait. We'll do it." They undressed him. He lay there—the copper-brown, almost hairless body, the old man's body, the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless—motionless, his eyes open but no longer looking at any of them, while the doctor examined him and drew the blankets up and put the stethoscope back into his bag and snapped the bag and only the boy knew that Sam too was going to die.

"Exhaustion," the doctor said. "Shock maybe. A man his age swimming rivers in December. He'll be all right. Just make him stay in bed for a day or two. Will there be somebody here with him?"

"There will be somebody here," Major de Spain said.

They went back to the house, to the rank little room where Boon still sat on the pallet bed with Lion's head under his hand while the men, the ones who had hunted behind Lion and the ones who had never seen him before today, came quietly in to look at him and went away. Then it was dawn and they all went out into the yard to look at Old Ben, with his eyes open too and his lips snarled back from his worn teeth and his mutilated foot and the little hard lumps under his skin which were the old bullets (there were fifty-two of them, buckshot rifle and ball) and the single almost invisible slit under his left shoulder where Boon's blade had finally found his life. Then Ash began to beat on the bottom of the dishpan with a heavy spoon to call them to breakfast and it was the first time he could remember hearing no sound from the dogs under the kitchen while they were eating. It was as if the old bear, even dead there in the yard, was a more potent terror still than they could face without Lion between them.

The rain had stopped during the night. By midmorning the thin sun appeared, rapidly burning away mist and cloud, warming the air and the earth; it would be one of those windless Mississippi December days which are a sort of Indian summer's Indian summer.

They moved Lion out to the front gallery, into the sun. It was Boon's idea. "Goddamn it," he said, "he never did want to stay in the house until I made him. You know that." He took a crowbar and loosened the floor boards under his pallet bed so it could be raised, mattress and all, without disturbing Lion's position, and they carried him out to the gallery and put him down facing the woods.

Then he and the doctor and McCaslin and Major de Spain went to Sam's hut. This time Sam didn't open his eyes and his breathing was so quiet, so peaceful that they could hardly see that he breathed. The doctor didn't even take out his stethoscope nor even touch him. "He's all right," the doctor said. "He didn't even catch cold. He just quit."

"Quit?" McCaslin said.

"Yes. Old people do that sometimes. Then they get a good night's sleep or maybe it's just a drink of whisky, and they change their minds."

They returned to the house. And then they began to arrive—the swamp-dwellers, the gaunt men who ran trap-lines and lived on quinine and coons and river water, the farmers of little corn- and cotton-patches along the bottom's edge whose fields and cribs and pig-pens the old bear had rifled, the loggers from the camp and the sawmill men from Hoke's and the town men from further away than that, whose hounds the old bear had slain and [whose] traps and deadfalls he had wrecked and whose lead he carried. They came up mounted and on foot and in wagons, to enter the yard and look at him and then go on to the front where Lion lay, filling the little yard and overflowing it until there were almost a hundred of them squatting and standing in the warm and drowsing sunlight, talking quietly of hunting, of the game and the dogs which ran it, of hounds and bear and deer and men of yesterday vanished from the earth, while from time to time the great blue dog would open his eyes, not as if he were listening to them but as though to look at the woods for a moment before closing his eyes again, to remember the woods or to see that they were still there. He died at sundown.

Major de Spain broke camp that night. They carried Lion into the woods, or Boon carried him that is, wrapped in a quilt from his bed, just as he had refused to let anyone else touch Lion yesterday until the doctor got there; Boon carrying Lion, and the boy and General Compson and Walter and still almost fifty of them following with lanterns and lighted pine-knots—men from Hoke's and even further, who would have to ride out of the bottom in the dark, and swamper and trappers who would have to walk even, scattering toward the little hidden huts where they lived. And Boon would let nobody else dig the grave either and lay Lion in it and cover

him and then General Compson stood at the head of it while the blaze and smoke of the pine-knots streamed away among the winter branches and spoke as he would have spoken over a man. Then they returned to camp. Major de Spain and McCaslin and Ash had rolled and tied all the bedding. The mules were hitched to the wagon and pointed out of the bottom and the wagon was already loaded and the stove in the kitchen was cold and the table was set with scraps of cold food and bread and only the coffee was hot when the boy<sup>6</sup> ran into the kitchen where Major de Spain and McCaslin had already eaten. "What?" he cried. "What? I'm not going."

"Yes," McCaslin said, "we're going out tonight. Major wants to get on back home."

"No!" he said. "I'm going to stay."

"You've got to be back in school Monday. You've already missed a week more than I intended. It will take you from now until Monday to catch up. Sam's all right. You heard Doctor Crawford. I'm going to leave Boon and Tennie's Jim both to stay with him until he feels like getting up."

He was panting. The others had come in. He looked rapidly and almost frantically around at the other faces. Boon had a fresh bottle. He upended it and started the cork by striking the bottom of the bottle with the heel of his hand and drew the cork with his teeth and spat it out and drank. "You're damn right you're going back to school," Boon said. "Or I'll burn the tail off of you myself if Cass dont, whether you are sixteen or sixty. Where in hell do you expect to get without education? Where would Cass be? Where in hell would I be if I hadn't never went to school?"

He looked at McCaslin again. He could feel his breath coming shorter and shorter and shallower and shallower, as if there were not enough air in the kitchen for that many to breathe. "This is just Thursday. I'll come home Sunday night on one of the horses. I'll come home Sunday, then. I'll make up the time I lost studying Sunday night, McCaslin," he said, without even despair.

"No, I tell you," McCaslin said. "Sit down here and eat your supper. We're going out to—"

"Hold up, Cass," General Compson said. The boy did not know General Compson had moved until he put his hand on his shoulder. "What is it, bud?" he said.

"I've got to stay," he said. "I've got to."

"All right," General Compson said. "You can stay. If missing an extra week of school is going to throw you so far behind you'll have to sweat to find out what some hired pedagogue put between the covers of a book, you better quit altogether.—And you shut up, Cass," he said, though McCaslin had not spoken. "You've got one

6. Isaac McCaslin.

foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you aint even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing and fearing too maybe but without being afraid, that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear none of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark; maybe by God that's the why and the wherefore of farms and banks.—I reckon you still aint going to tell what it is?"

But still he could not. "I've got to stay," he said.

"All right," General Compson said. "There's plenty of grub left. And you'll come home Sunday, like you promised McCaslin? Not Sunday night: Sunday."

"Yes, sir," he said.

"All right," General Compson said. "Sit down and eat, boys," he said. "Let's get started. It's going to be cold before we get home."

They ate. The wagon was already loaded and ready to depart; all they had to do was to get into it. Boon would drive them out to the road, to the farmer's stable where the surrey had been left. He stood beside the wagon, in silhouette on the sky, turbaned like a Paythan<sup>7</sup> and taller than any there, the bottle tilted. Then he flung the bottle from his lips without even lowering it, spinning and glinting in the faint starlight, empty. "Them that's going," he said, "get in the goddamn wagon. Them that aint, get out of the goddamn way." The others got in. Boon mounted to the seat beside General Compson and the wagon moved, on into the obscurity until the boy could no longer see it, even the moving density of it amid the greater night. But he could still hear it, for a long while: the slow, deliberate banging of the wooden frame as it lurched from rut to rut. And he could hear Boon even when he could no longer hear the wagon. He was singing, harsh, tuneless, loud.

That was Thursday. On Saturday morning Tennie's Jim left on McCaslin's woods-horse which had not been out of the bottom one time now in six years, and late that afternoon rode through the gate on the spent horse and on to the commissary where McCaslin was rationing the tenants and the wage-hands for the coming week, and this time McCaslin forestalled any necessity or risk of having to wait while Major de Spain's surrey was being horsed and harnessed. He took their own, and with Tennie's Jim already asleep in the back seat he drove in to Jefferson and waited while Major de Spain changed to boots and put on his overcoat, and they drove

7. His bandaged head recalls the large turbans of the Paythans (Paithans) of India.

the thirty miles in the dark of that night and at daybreak on Sunday morning they swapped to the waiting mare and mule and as the sun rose they rode out of the jungle and onto the low ridge where they had buried Lion: the low mound of unannealed earth where Boon's spade-marks still showed, and beyond the grave the platform of freshly cut saplings bound between four posts and the blanket-wrapped bundle upon the platform<sup>8</sup> and Boon and the boy squatting between the platform and the grave until Boon, the bandage removed, ripped from his head so that the long scoriations of Old Ben's claws resembled crusted tar in the sunlight, sprang up and threw down upon them with the old gun with which he had never been known to hit anything although McCaslin was already off the mule, kicked both feet free of the irons<sup>9</sup> and vaulted down before the mule had stopped, walking toward Boon.

"Stand back," Boon said. "By God, you wont touch him. Stand back, McCaslin." Still McCaslin came on, fast yet without haste.

"Cass!" Major de Spain said. Then he said, "Boon! You, Boon!" and he was down too and the boy rose too, quickly, and still McCaslin came on not fast but steady and walked up to the grave and reached his hand steadily out, quickly yet still not fast, and took hold the gun by the middle so that he and Boon faced one another across Lion's grave, both holding the gun, Boon's spent indomitable amazed and frantic face almost a head higher than McCaslin's beneath the black scoriations of beast's claws and then Boon's chest began to heave as though there were not enough air in all the woods, in all the wilderness, for all of them, for him and anyone else, even for him alone.

"Turn it loose," McCaslin said.

"You damn little spindling—" Boon said. "Don't you know I can take it away from you? Don't you know I can tie it around your neck like a damn cravat?"

"Yes," McCaslin said. "Turn it loose, Boon."

"This is the way he wanted it. He told us. He told us exactly how to do it. And by God you aint going to move him. So we did it like he said, and I been sitting here ever since to keep the damn wildcats and varmints away from him and by God—" Then McCaslin had the gun, downslanted while he pumped the slide, the five shells snicking out of it so fast that the last one was almost out before the first one touched the ground and McCaslin dropped the gun behind him without once having taken his eyes from Boon's.

"Did you kill him, Boon?" he said. Then Boon moved. He turned, he moved like he was still drunk and then for a moment blind too, one hand out as he blundered toward the big tree and seemed to

8. This manner of burial, with ritualistic ceremonies, was common among the Chickasaws—the tribe of Sam Fathers

—and other Indian tribes of the East.  
9. McCaslin Edmonds has kicked free of the stirrups.

stop walking before he reached the tree so that he plunged, fell toward it, flinging up both hands and catching himself against the tree and turning until his back was against it, backing with the tree's trunk his wild spent scoriated face and the tremendous heave and collapse of his chest, McCaslin following, facing him again, never once having moved his eyes from Boon's eyes. "Did you kill him, Boon?"

"No!" Boon said. "No!"

"Tell the truth," McCaslin said. "I would have done it if he had asked me to." Then the boy moved. He was between them, facing McCaslin; the water felt as if it had burst and sprung not from his eyes alone but from his whole face, like sweat.

"Leave him alone!" he cried. "Goddamn it! Leave him alone!"

#### IV<sup>1</sup>

then he was twenty-one. He could say it, himself and his cousin juxtaposed not against the wilderness but against the tamed land which was to have been his heritage, the land which old Carothers McCaslin, his grandfather, had bought with white man's money from the wild men whose grandfathers without guns hunted it, and tamed and ordered, or believed he had tamed and ordered it, for the reason that the human beings he held in bondage and in the power of life and death had removed the forest from it and in their sweat scratched the surface of it to a depth of perhaps fourteen inches in order to grow something out of it which had not been there before, and which could be translated back into the money he who believed he had bought it had had to pay to get it and hold it, and a reasonable profit too: and for which reason old Carothers McCaslin, knowing better, could raise his children, his descendants and heirs, to believe the land was his to hold and bequeath, since the strong and ruthless man has a cynical foreknowledge of his own vanity and pride and strength and a contempt for all his get: just as, knowing better, Major de Spain had his fragment of that wilderness which was bigger and older than any recorded deed: just as, knowing better, old Thomas Sutpen, from whom Major de Spain had had his fragment for money: just as Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, from whom Thomas Sutpen had had the fragment for money or rum or whatever it was, knew in his turn that not even a fragment of it had been his to relinquish or sell

not against the wilderness but against the land, not in pursuit and lust but in relinquishment; and in the commissary as it should have been, not the heart perhaps but certainly the solar-plexus of the repudiated and relinquished: the square, galleried, wooden building

1. In Part IV, Isaac is shown on his twenty-first birthday, in a long dialogue with his cousin, the "Cass," or McCaslin Edmonds, of the bear hunts. Isaac

has repudiated his inheritance, the McCaslin plantation, in order to free his soul from the weight of the past.



squatting like a portent above the fields whose laborers it still held in thrall, '65 or no, and placarded over with advertisements for snuff and cures for chills and salves and potions manufactured and sold by white men to bleach the pigment and straighten the hair of Negroes that they might resemble the very race which for two hundred years had held them in bondage and from which for another hundred years not even a bloody civil war would have set them completely free

himself and his cousin amid the old smells of cheese and salt meat and kerosene and harness, the ranked shelves of tobacco and overalls and bottled medicine and thread and plow-bolts, the barrels and kegs of flour and meal and molasses and nails, the wall pegs dependant with plowlines and plow-collars and hames and trace-chains, and the desk and the shelf above it on which rested the ledgers in which McCaslin recorded the slow outward trickle of food and supplies and equipment which returned each fall as cotton made and ginned and sold (two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on), and the older ledgers, clumsy and archaic in size and shape, on the yellowed pages of which were recorded in the faded hand of his father Theophilus and his uncle Amodeus during the two decades before the Civil War the manumission,<sup>2</sup> in title at least, of Carothers McCaslin's slaves:

'Relinquish,' McCaslin said. 'Relinquish. You, the direct male descendant of him who saw the opportunity and took it, bought the land, took the land, got the land no matter how, held it to bequeath, no matter how, out of the old grant, the first patent, when it was a wilderness of wild beasts and wilder men, and cleared it, translated it into something to bequeath to his children, worthy of bequeathment for his descendants' ease and security and pride, and to perpetuate his name and accomplishments. Not only the male descendant but the only and last descendant in the male line and in the third generation, while I am not only four generations from old Carothers, I derived through a woman and the very McCaslin in my name is mine only by sufferance and courtesy and my grandmother's pride in what that man accomplished, whose legacy and monument you think you can repudiate.' and he

'I can't repudiate it. It was never mine to repudiate. It was never Father's and Uncle Buddy's to bequeath me to repudiate, because it was never Grandfather's to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudiate, because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation. Because it was never Ikkemotubbe's fathers' fathers' to bequeath Ikkemotubbe to sell to

2. Setting free.

Grandfather or any man because on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realized, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever, father to father to father, and the man who bought it bought nothing.'

'Bought nothing?' and he

'Bought nothing. Because He told in the Book how He created the earth, made it and looked at it and said it was all right, and then He made man. He made the earth first and peopled it with dumb creatures, and then He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread. And I know what you are going to say,' he said: 'That nevertheless Grandfather—' and McCaslin

'—did own it. And not the first. Not alone and not the first since, as your Authority states, man was dispossessed of Eden. Nor yet the second and still not alone, on down through the tedious and shabby chronicle of His chosen sprung from Abraham; and of the sons of them who dispossessed Abraham,<sup>3</sup> and of the five hundred years during which half the known world and all it contained was chattel to one city, as this plantation and all the life it contained was chattel and revokeless thrall to this commissary store and those ledgers yonder during your grandfather's life; and the next thousand years while men fought over the fragments of that collapse until at last even the fragments were exhausted and men snarled over the gnawed bones of the old world's worthless evening until an accidental egg<sup>4</sup> discovered to them a new hemisphere. So let me say it: That nevertheless and notwithstanding old Carothers did own it. Bought it, got it, no matter; kept it, held it, no matter; bequeathed it: else why do you stand here relinquishing and repudiating? Held it, kept it for fifty years until you could repudiate it, while He—this Arbiter, this Architect, this Umpire—condoned—or did He? looked down and saw—or did He? Or at least did nothing: saw, and could not, or did not see; saw, and would not, or perhaps He would not

3. But cf. Genesis xxv: 5, 8, where Abraham "gave all that he had" to his son Isaac and "died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years." Abraham's descendants, however, were dispossessed during the captivity and dispersion of Israel; see the phrase "dispossessed of Canaan" in the next paragraph.

4. But the story has it that at a banquet following Columbus' discovery of America, one of the party disparaged his

achievement by saying that someone would have made the discovery in any case. Columbus then challenged those present to make an egg stand on end; and when all had failed, he did it himself by crushing the end slightly. The moral was, "After the deed is done, everybody knows how to do it." The story is apocryphal. Cf. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea* (1942), Vol. II, pp. 14-15.

see—perverse, impotent, or blind: which?’ and he

‘Dispossessed.’ and McCaslin

‘What?’ and he

‘Dispossessed. Not impotent: He didn’t condone; not blind, because He watched it. And let me say it. Dispossessed of Eden. Dispossessed of Canaan, and those who dispossessed him dispossessed him dispossessed, and the five hundred years of absentee landlords in the Roman bagnios,<sup>5</sup> and the thousand years of wild men from the northern woods who dispossessed them and devoured their ravished substance ravished in turn again and then snarled in what you call the old world’s worthless twilight over the old world’s gnawed bones, blasphemous in His name until He used a simple egg to discover to them a new world where a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another. And Grandfather did own the land nevertheless and notwithstanding because He permitted it, not impotent and not condoning and not blind, because He ordered and watched it. He saw the land already accursed even as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe’s father old Issetibbeha and old Issetibbeha’s fathers too held it, already tainted even before any white man owned it by what Grandfather and his kind, his fathers, had brought into the new land which He had vouchsafed them out of pity and sufferance, on condition of pity and humility and sufferance and endurance, from that old world’s corrupt and worthless twilight as though in the sailfuls of the old world’s tainted wind which drove the ships—’ and McCaslin

‘Ah.’

‘—and no hope for the land anywhere so long as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe’s descendants held it in unbroken succession. Maybe He saw that only by voiding the land for a time of Ikkemotubbe’s blood and substituting for it another blood, could He accomplish His purpose. Maybe He knew already what that other blood would be, maybe it was more than justice that only the white man’s blood was available and capable to raise the white man’s curse, more than vengeance when—’ and McCaslin

‘Ah.’

‘—when He used the blood which had brought in the evil to destroy the evil as doctors use fever to burn up fever, poison to slay poison. Maybe He chose Grandfather out of all of them He might have picked. Maybe He knew that Grandfather himself would not serve His purpose because Grandfather was born too soon too, but that Grandfather would have descendants, the right descendants; maybe He had foreseen already the descendants Grandfather would have, maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed

prognitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free—' and McCaslin

"The sons of Ham.<sup>6</sup> You who quote the Book: the sons of Ham.' and he

"There are some things He said in the Book, and some things reported of Him that He did not say. And I know what you will say now: That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You don't need to choose. The heart already knows. He didn't have His Book written to be read by what must elect and choose, but by the heart, not by the wise of the earth because maybe they don't need it or maybe the wise no longer have any heart, but by the doomed and lowly of the earth who have nothing else to read with but the heart. Because the men who wrote His Book for Him were writing about truth and there is only one truth and it covers all things that touch the heart.' and McCaslin

"So these men who transcribed His Book for Him were sometime liars.' and he

"Yes. Because they were human men. They were trying to write down the heart's truth out of the heart's driving complexity, for all the complex and troubled hearts which would beat after them. What they were trying to tell, what He wanted said, was too simple. Those for whom they transcribed His words could not have believed them. It had to be expounded in the everyday terms which they were familiar with and could comprehend, not only those who listened but those who told it too, because if they who were that near to Him as to have been elected from among all who breathed and spoke language to transcribe and relay His words, could comprehend truth only through the complexity of passion and lust and hate and fear which drives the heart, what distance back to truth must they traverse whom truth could only reach by word-of-mouth?' and McCaslin

"I might answer that, since you have taken to proving your points and disproving mine by the same text, I don't know. But I don't say that, because you have answered yourself: No time at all if, as you say, the heart knows truth, the infallible and unerring heart. And perhaps you are right, since although you admitted three generations from old Carothers to you, there were not three. There were not even completely two. Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy. And they not the first and not alone. A thousand other Bucks and Buddies in less than two generations and sometimes less than one in this land which so you claim God created and man himself cursed and tainted. Not to mention 1865.' and he

6. Cf. Genesis ix: 25. The Negro race was supposed by apologists for slavery to be descended from Canaan (son of

Ham) and cursed by Noah (Ham's father) to be "a servant of servants \* \* \* unto his brethren."

'Yes. More men than Father and Uncle Buddy,' not even glancing toward the shelf above the desk, nor did McCaslin. They did not need to. To him it was as though the ledgers in their scarred cracked leather bindings were being lifted down one by one in their fading sequence and spread open on the desk or perhaps upon some apocryphal Bench, or even Altar, or perhaps before the Throne Itself for a last perusal and contemplation and refreshment of the Allknowledgeable, before the yellowed pages and the brown thin ink in which was recorded the injustice and a little at least of its amelioration and restitution faded back forever into the anonymous communal original dust

the yellowed pages scrawled in fading ink by the hand first of his grandfather and then of his father and uncle, bachelors up to and past fifty and then sixty, the one who ran the plantation and the farming of it, and the other who did the housework and the cooking and continued to do it even after his twin married and the boy himself was born

the two brothers who as soon as their father was buried moved out of the tremendously-conceived, the almost barnlike edifice which he had not even completed, into a one-room log cabin which the two of them built themselves and added other rooms to while they lived in it, refusing to allow any slave to touch any timber of it other than the actual raising into place the logs which two men alone could not handle, and domiciled all the slaves in the big house some of the windows of which were still merely boarded up with odds and ends of plank or with the skins of bear and deer nailed over the empty frames: each sundown the brother who superintended the farming would parade the Negroes as a first sergeant dismisses a company, and herd them willynilly, man woman and child, without question protest or recourse, into the tremendous abortive edifice scarcely yet out of embryo, as if even old Carothers McCaslin had paused aghast at the concrete indication of his own vanity's boundless conceiving: he would call his mental roll and herd them in and with a hand-wrought nail as long as a fenching-knife and suspended from a short deer-hide thong attached to the door-jamb for that purpose, he would nail to the door of that house which lacked half its windows and had no hinged back door at all, so that presently, and for fifty years afterward, when the boy himself was big to hear and remember it, there was in the land a sort of folk-tale: of the countryside all night long full of skulking McCaslin slaves dodging the moonlit roads and the Patrol-riders to visit other plantations, and of the unspoken gentlemen's agreement between the two white men and the two dozen black ones that, after the white man had counted them and driven the home-made nail into the front door at sundown, neither of the white men would go around behind the

house and look at the back door, provided that all the Negroes were behind the front one when the brother who drove it drew out the nail again at daybreak

the twins who were identical even in their handwriting, unless you had specimens side by side to compare, and even when both hands appeared on the same page (as often happened, as if, long since past any oral intercourse, they had used the diurnally advancing pages to conduct the unavoidable business of the compulsion which had traversed all the waste wilderness of North Mississippi in 1830 and '40 and singled them out to drive) they both looked as though they had been written by the same perfectly normal ten-year-old boy, even to the spelling, except that the spelling did not improve as one by one the slaves which Carothers McCaslin had inherited and purchased—Roscius and Phoebe and Thucydides and Eunice and their descendants, and Sam Fathers and his mother for both of whom he had swapped an underbred trotting gelding to old Ikemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, from whom he had likewise bought the land, and Tennie Beauchamp whom the twin Amodeus had won from a neighbor in a poker-game, and the anomaly calling itself Percival Brownlee which the twin Theophilus had purchased, neither he nor his brother ever knew why apparently, from Bedford Forrest while he was still only a slave-dealer and not yet a general (It was a single page, not long and covering less than a year, not seven months in fact, begun in the hand which the boy had learned to distinguish as that of his father:

*Percavil Brownly 26yr Old. cleark @ Bookepper.  
bought from N.B.Forest at Cold Water 3 Mar  
1856 \$265. dollars*

and beneath that, in the same hand:

*5 mar 1856 No bookepper any way Cant read.  
Can write his Name but I already put that down  
My self Says he can Plough but dont look like it  
to Me. sent to Feild to day Mar 5 1856*

and the same hand:

*6 Mar 1856 Cant plough either Says he aims to be  
a Precher so may be he can lead live stock to Crick  
to Drink*

and this time it was the other, the hand which he now recognized as his uncle's when he could see them both on the same page:

*Mar 23th 1856 Cant do that either Except one at  
a Time Get shut of him*

then the first again:

*24 Mar 1856 Who in hell would buy him*

then the second:

*19th of Apr 1856 Nobody You put yourself out of  
Market at Cold Water two months ago I never  
said sell him Free him*

the first:

*22 Apr 1856 Ill get it out of him*

the second:

*Jun 13th 1856 How \$1 per yr 265\$ 265 yrs Whol  
sign his Free paper*

then the first again:

*1 Oct 1856 Mule josephine Broke Leg @ shot  
Wrong stall wrong niger wrong everything \$100.  
dolars*

and the same:

*2 Oct 1856 Freed Debit McCaslin @ McCaslin  
\$265. dolars*

then the second again:

*Oct 3th Debit Theophilus McCaslin Niger 265\$  
Mule 100\$ 365\$ He hasnt gone yet Father should  
be here*

then the first:

*3 Oct 1856 Son of a bitch wont leave What would  
father done*

the second:

*29th of Oct 1856 Renamed him*

the first:

*31 Oct 1856 Renamed him what*

the second:

*Chrstm's 1856 Spintrius*

) took substance and even a sort of shadowy life with their passions and complexities too, as page followed page and year year; all there, not only the general and condoned injustice and its slow amortization but the specific tragedy which had not been condoned and could never be amortized; the new page and the new ledger, the hand which he could now recognize at first glance as his father's:

*Father dide Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Callina 1772 Missippy 1837. Dide and burid 27 June 1837*

*Roskus. rased by Granfather in Callina Dont know how old. Freed 27 June 1837 Dont want to leave. Dide and Burid 12 Jan 1841*

*Fibby Roskus Wife. bought by granfather in Callina says Fifty Freed 27 June 1837 Dont want to leave. Dide and burd 1 Aug 1849*

*Thucydus Roskus @ Fibby Son born in Callina 1779. Refused 10acre peace fathers Will 28 Jun 1837 Refused Cash offer \$200. dollars from A. @ T. McCaslin 28 Jun 1837 Wants to stay and work it out*

and beneath this and covering the next five pages and almost that many years, the slow, day-by-day accrument of the wages allowed him and the food and clothing—the molasses and meat and meal, the cheap durable shirts and jeans and shoes, and now and then a coat against rain and cold—charged against the slowly yet steadily mounting sum of balance (and it would seem to the boy that he could actually see the black man, the slave whom his white owner had forever manumitted by the very act from which the black man could never be free so long as memory lasted, entering the commissary, asking permission perhaps of the white man's son to see the ledger-page which he could not even read, not even asking for the white man's word, which he would have had to accept for the reason that there was absolutely no way under the sun for him to test it, as to how the account stood, how much longer before he could go and never return, even if only as far as Jefferson seventeen miles away), on to the double pen-stroke closing the final entry:

*3 Nov 1841 By Cash to Thucydus McCaslin \$200. dollars Set Up blaksmith in J. Dec 1841 Dide and burid in J. 17 feb 1854*

*Eunice Bought by Father in New Orleans 1807 \$650. dollars. Marrid to Thucydus 1809 Drownd in Crick Cristmas Day 1832*

and then the other hand appeared, the first time he had seen it in the ledger to distinguish it as his uncle's, the cook and housekeeper whom even McCaslin, who had known him and the boy's father for sixteen years before the boy was born, remembered as sitting all day long in the rocking chair from which he cooked the food, before the kitchen fire on which he cooked it:

*June 21th 1833 Drownd herself*



and the first:

*23 Jun 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger  
drowning him self*

and the second, unhurried, with a complete finality; the two identical entries might have been made with a rubber stamp save for the date:

*Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself*

and he thought *But why? But why?* He was sixteen then. It was neither the first time he had been alone in the commissary nor the first time he had taken down the old ledgers familiar on their shelf above the desk ever since he could remember. As a child and even after nine and ten and eleven, when he had learned to read, he would look up at the scarred and cracked backs and ends but with no particular desire to open them, and though he intended to examine them someday because he realized that they probably contained a chronological and much more comprehensive though doubtless tedious record than he would ever get from any other source, not alone of his own flesh and blood but of all his people, not only the whites but the black ones too, who were as much a part of his ancestry as his white progenitors, and of the land which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common without regard to color or titular ownership, it would only be on some idle day when he was old and perhaps even bored a little, since what the old books contained would be after all these years fixed immutably, finished, unalterable, harmless. Then he was sixteen. He knew what he was going to find before he found it. He got the commissary key from McCaslin's room after midnight while McCaslin was asleep and with the commissary door shut and locked behind him and the forgotten lantern stinking anew the rank dead icy air, he leaned above the yellowed page and thought not *Why drowned herself*, but thinking what he believed his father had thought when he found his brother's first comment: *Why did Uncle Buddy think she had drowned herself?* finding, beginning to find on the next succeeding page what he knew he would find, only this was still not it because he already knew this:

*Tomasina called Tomy Daughter of Thucydus @  
Eunice Born 1810 dide in Child bed June 1833  
and Burd. Yr stars fell*

nor the next:

*Turl Son of Thucydus @ Eunice Tomy born Jun  
1833 yr stars fell Fathers will*

and nothing more, no tedious recording filling this page of wages, day by day, and food and clothing charged against them, no entry of his death and burial because he had outlived his white half-brothers and the books which McCaslin kept did not include obituaries: just *Fathers will* and he had seen that too: old Carothers' bold cramped hand far less legible than his sons' even and not much better in spelling, who while capitalizing almost every noun and verb, made no effort to punctuate or construct whatever, just as he made no effort either to explain or obfuscate the thousand-dollar legacy to the son of an unmarried slave-girl, to be paid only at the child's coming-of-age, bearing the consequence of the act of which there was still no definite incontrovertible proof that he acknowledged, not out of his own substance, but penalizing his sons with it, charging them a cash forfeit on the accident of their own paternity; not even a bribe for silence toward his own fame since his fame would suffer only after he was no longer present to defend it, flinging almost contemptuously, as he might a cast-off hat or pair of shoes, the thousand dollars which could have had no more reality to him under those conditions than it would have to the Negro, the slave who would not even see it until he came of age, twenty-one years too late to begin to learn what money was. *So I reckon that was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger*, he thought. *Even if My son wasn't but just two words. But there must have been love*, he thought. *Some sort of love. Even what he would have called love: not just an afternoon's or a night's spittoon.* There was the old man, old, within five years of his life's end, long a widower and, since his sons were not only bachelors but were approaching middleage, lonely in the house and doubtless even bored, since his plantation was established now and functioning and there was enough money now, too much of it probably for a man whose vices even apparently remained below his means; there was the girl, husbandless and young, only twenty-three when the child was born: perhaps he had sent for her at first out of loneliness, to have a young voice and movement in the house, summoned her, bade her mother send her each morning to sweep the floors and make the beds and the mother acquiescing since that was probably already understood, already planned: the only child of a couple who were not field hands and who held themselves something above the other slaves, not alone for that reason but because the husband and his father and mother too had been inherited by the white man from his father, and the white man himself had travelled three hundred miles and better to New Orleans in a day when men travelled by horseback or steamboat, and bought the girl's mother as a wife for him

and that was all. The old frail pages seemed to turn of their own

accord even while he thought, *His own daughter His own daughter. No. No Not even him*, back to that one where the white man (not even a widower then) who never went anywhere, any more than his sons in their time ever did, and who did not need another slave, had gone all the way to New Orleans and bought one. And Tomey's Terrel was still alive when the boy was ten years old and he knew from his own observation and memory that there had already been some white in Tomey's Terrel's blood before his father gave him the rest of it; and looking down at the yellowed page sprcad beneath the yellow glow of the lantern smoking and stinking in that rank chill midnight room fifty years later, he seemed to see her actually walking into the icy creek on that Christmas day six months before her daughter's and her lover's (*Her first lover's*, he thought. *Her first*) child was born, solitary, inflexible, griefless, ceremonial, in formal and succinct repudiation of grief and despair, who had already had to repudiate belief and hope

that was all. He would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he; the yellowed pages in their fading and implacable succession were as much a part of his consciousness and would remain so forever, as the fact of his own nativity:

*Tennie Beauchamp 21yrs Won by Amodeus McCaslin from Hubert Beauchamp Esqre Possible Strait against three Treys in sigt Not called 1859 Marrid to Tomys Turl 1859*

and no date of freedom because her freedom, as well as that of her first surviving child, derived not from Buck and Buddy McCaslin in the commissary but from a stranger in Washington, and no date of death and burial, not only because McCaslin kept no obituaries in his books, but because in this year 1883 she was still alive and would remain so to see a grandson by her last surviving child:

*Amodeus McCaslin Beauchamp Son of tomys Turl @ Tennie Beauchamp 1859 dide 1859*

then his uncle's hand entire, because his father was now a member of the cavalry command of that man whose name as a slave-dealer he could not even spell: and not even a page and not even a full line:

*Dauter Tomes Turl and tenny 1862*

and not even a line and not even a sex and no cause given though the boy could guess it because McCaslin was thirteen then and he remembered how there was not always enough to eat in more places than Vicksburg:

*Child of tomes Turl and Tenny 1863*

and the same hand again and this one lived, as though Tennie's perseverance and the fading and diluted ghost of old Carothers' ruthlessness had at last conquered even starvation: and clearer, fuller, more carefully written and spelled than the boy had yet seen it, as if the old man, who should have been a woman to begin with, trying to run what was left of the plantation in his brother's absence in the intervals of cooking and caring for himself and the fourteen-year-old orphan, had taken as an omen for renewed hope the fact that this nameless inheritor of slaves was at least remaining alive long enough to receive a name:

*James Thucydus Beauchamp Son of Tomes Turl  
and Tenny Beauchamp Born 29th december 1864  
and both Well Wanted to call him Theophilus but  
Tride Amodeus McCaslin and Callina McCaslin  
and both dide so Disswaded Them Born at Two  
clock A,m, both Well*

but no more, nothing; it would be another two years yet before the boy, almost a man now, would return from the abortive trip into Tennessee with the still-intact third of old Carothers' legacy to his Negro son and his descendants, which as the three surviving children established at last one by one their apparent intention of surviving, their white half-uncles had increased to a thousand dollars each, conditions permitting, as they came of age, and completed the page himself as far as it would even be completed when that day was long passed beyond which a man born in 1864 (or 1867 either, when he himself saw light) could have expected or himself hoped or even wanted to be still alive; his own hand now, queerly enough resembling neither his father's nor his uncle's nor even McCaslin's, but like that of his grandfather's save for the spelling:

*Vanished sometime on night of his twenty-first  
birthday Dec 29 1885. Traced by Isaac McCaslin  
to Jackson Tenn. and there lost. His third of legacy  
\$1000.00 returned to McCaslin Edmonds Trustee  
this day Jan 12 1886*

but not yet: that would be two years yet, and now his father's again, whose old commander was now quit of soldiering and slave-trading both; once more in the ledger and then not again, and more illegible than ever, almost indecipherable at all from the rheumatism which now crippled him, and almost completely innocent now even of any sort of spelling as well as punctuation, as if the four years during which he had followed the sword of the only man ever breathing who ever sold him a Negro, let alone beat him in a trade, had

convinced him not only of the vanity of faith and hope, but of orthography too:

*Miss sophonsiba b dtr t t @ t 1869*

but not of belief and will because it was there, written, as McCaslin had told him, with the left hand, but there in the ledger one time more and then not again, for the boy himself was a year old, and when Lucas was born six years later, his father and uncle had been dead inside the same twelve-months almost five years; his own hand again, who was there and saw it, 1886, she was just seventeen, two years younger than himself, and he was in the commissary when McCaslin entered out of the first dusk and said, 'He wants to marry Fonsiba,' like that: and he looked past McCaslin and saw the man, the stranger, taller than McCaslin and wearing better clothes than McCaslin and most of the other white men the boy knew habitually wore, who entered the room like a white man and stood in it like a white man, as though he had let McCaslin precede him into it not because McCaslin's skin was white but simply because McCaslin lived there and knew the way, and who talked like a white man too, looking at him past McCaslin's shoulder rapidly and keenly once and then no more, without further interest, as a mature and contained white man not impatient but just pressed for time might have looked. 'Marry Fonsiba?' he cried. 'Marry Fonsiba?' and then no more either, just watching and listening while McCaslin and the Negro talked:

'To live in Arkansas, I believe you said.'

'Yes. I have property there. A farm.'

'Property? A farm? You own it?'

'Yes.'

'You don't say Sir, do you?'

'To my elders, yes.'

'I sec. You are from the North.'

'Yes. Since a child.'

'Then your father was a slave.'

'Yes. Oncc.'

'Then how do you own a farm in Arkansas?'

'I have a grant. It was my father's. From the United States. For military service.'

'I sec,' McCaslin said. 'The Yankee army.'

'The United States army,' the stranger said; and then himself again, crying it at McCaslin's back:

'Call aunt Tennie! I'll go get her! I'll—' But McCaslin was not even including him; the stranger did not even glance back toward his voice, the two of them speaking to one another again as if he were not even there:

'Since you seem to have it all settled,' McCaslin said, 'why have you bothered to consult my authority at all?'

'I don't,' the stranger said. 'I acknowledge your authority only so far as you admit your responsibility toward her as a female member of the family of which you are the head. I don't ask your permission. I——'

'That will do!' McCaslin said. But the stranger did not falter. It was neither as if he were ignoring McCaslin nor as if he had failed to hear him. It was as though he were making, not at all an excuse and not exactly a justification, but simply a statement which the situation absolutely required and demanded should be made in McCaslin's hearing whether McCaslin listened to it or not. It was as if he were talking to himself, for himself to hear the words spoken aloud. They faced one another, not close yet at slightly less than foils' distance, erect, their voices not raised, not impactive, just succinct:

'—I inform you, notify you in advance as chief of her family. No man of honor could do less. Besides, you have, in your way, according to your lights and upbringing——'

'That's enough, I said,' McCaslin said. 'Be off this place by full dark. Go.' But for another moment the other did not move, contemplating McCaslin with that detached and heatless look, as if he were watching reflected in McCaslin's pupils the tiny image of the figure he was sustaining.

'Yes,' he said. 'After all, this is your house. And in your fashion you have. . . . But no matter. You are right. This is enough.' He turned back toward the door; he paused again but only for a second, already moving while he spoke: 'Be easy. I will be good to her.' Then he was gone.

'But how did she ever know him?' the boy cried. 'I never even heard of him before! And Fonsiba, that's never been off this place except to go to church since she was born——'

'Ha,' McCaslin said. 'Even their parents don't know until too late how seventeen-year-old girls ever met the men who marry them too, if they are lucky.' And the next morning they were both gone, Fonsiba too. McCaslin never saw her again, nor did he, because the woman he found at last, five months later, was no one he had ever known. He carried a third of the three-thousand-dollar fund in gold in a money-belt, as when he had vainly traced Tennie's Jim into Tennessee a year ago. They—the man—had left an address of some sort with Tennie, and three months later a letter came, written by the man although McCaslin's wife, Alice, had taught Fonsiba to read and write too a little. But it bore a different postmark from the address the man had left with Tennie, and he travelled by rail as far as he could and then by contracted stage and then by a hired

livery rig and then by rail again for a distance: an experienced traveller by now and an experienced bloodhound too, and a successful one this time because he would have to be; as the slow interminable empty muddy December miles crawled and crawled and night followed night in hotels, in roadside taverns of rough logs and containing little else but a bar, and in the cabins of strangers, and the hay of lonely barns, in none of which he dared undress because of his secret golden girdle like that of a disguised one of the Magi travelling incognito and not even hope to draw him, but only determination and desperation, he would tell himself: *I will have to find her. I will have to. We have already lost one of them. I will have to find her this time.* He did. Hunched in the slow and icy rain, on a spent hired horse splashed to the chest and higher, he saw it—a single log edifice with a clay chimney, which seemed in process of being flattened by the rain to a nameless and valueless rubble of dissolution in that roadless and even pathless waste of unfenced fallow and wilderness jungle—no barn, no stable, not so much as a hen-coop: just a log cabin built by hand and no clever hand either, a meagre pile of clumsily-cut firewood sufficient for about one day and not even a gaunt hound to come bellowing out from under the house when he rode up—a farm only in embryo, perhaps a good farm, maybe even a plantation someday, but not now, not for years yet and only then with labor, hard and enduring and unflagging work and sacrifice; he shoved open the crazy kitchen door in its awry frame and entered an icy gloom where not even a fire for cooking burned, and after another moment saw, crouched into the wall's angle behind a crude table, the coffee-colored face which he had known all his life but knew no more, the body which had been born within a hundred yards of the room that he was born in and in which some of his own blood ran, but which was now completely inheritor of generation after generation to whom an unannounced white man on a horse was a white man's hired Patroller wearing a pistol sometimes and a blacksnake whip always; he entered the next room, the only other room the cabin owned, and found, sitting in a rocking chair before the hearth, the man himself, reading—sitting there in the only chair in the house, before that miserable fire for which there was not wood sufficient to last twenty-four hours, in the same ministerial clothing in which he had entered the commissary five months ago and a pair of gold-framed spectacles which, when he looked up and then rose to his feet, the boy saw did not even contain lenses, reading a book in the midst of that desolation, that muddy waste, fenceless and even pathless and without even a walled shed for stock to stand beneath: and over all, permeant, clinging to the man's very clothing and exuding from his skin itself, that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion, that

boundless rapacity and folly, of the carpet-bagger followers of victorious armies.

'Don't you see?' he cried. 'Don't you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse? Granted that my people brought the curse onto the land: maybe for that reason their descendants alone can—not resist it, not combat it—maybe just endure and outlast it until the curse is lifted. Then your peoples' turn will come because we have forfeited ours. But not now. Not yet. Don't you see?'

The other stood now, the unfrayed garments still ministerial even if not quite so fine, the book closed upon one finger to keep the place, the lenseless spectacles held like a music master's wand in the other workless hand while the owner of it spoke his measured and sonorous imbecility of the boundless folly and the baseless hope: 'You're wrong. The curse you whites brought into this land has been lifted. It has been voided and discharged. We are seeing a new era, an era dedicated, as our founders intended it, to freedom, liberty and equality for all, to which this country will be the new Canaan——'

'Freedom from what? From work? Canaan?' He jerked his arm, comprehensive, almost violent: whereupon it all seemed to stand there about them, intact and complete and visible in the drafty, damp, heatless, Negro-stale Negro-rank sorry room—the empty fields without plow or seed to work them, fenceless against the stock which did not exist within or without the walled stable which likewise was not there. 'What corner of Canaan is this?'

'You are seeing it at a bad time. This is winter. No man farms this time of year.'

'I see. And of course her need for food and clothing will stand still while the land lies fallow.'

'I have a pension,' the other said. He said it as a man might say *I have grace* or *I own a gold mine*. 'I have my father's pension too. It will arrive on the first of the month. What day is this?'

'The eleventh,' he said. 'Twenty days more. And until then?'

'I have a few groceries in the house from my credit account with the merchant in Midnight who banks my pension check for me. I have executed to him a power of attorney to handle it for me as a matter of mutual——'

'I see. And if the groceries don't last the twenty days?'

'I still have one more hog.'

'Where?'

'Outside,' the other said. 'It is customary in this country to allow the stock to range free during the winter for food. It comes up from time to time. But no matter if it doesn't; I can probably trace



its footprints when the need——'

'Yes!' he cried. "Because no matter: you still have the pension check. And the man in Midnight will cash it and pay himself out of it for what you have already eaten and if there is any left over, it is yours. And the hog will be eaten by then or you still can't catch it, and then what will you do?"

'It will be almost spring then,' the other said. 'I am planning in the spring——'

'It will be January,' he said. 'And then February. And then more than half of March——' and when he stopped again in the kitchen she had not moved, she did not even seem to breathe or to be alive except her eyes watching him; when he took a step toward her it was still not movement because she could have retreated no further: only the tremendous, fathomless, ink-colored eyes in the narrow, thin, too thin, coffee-colored face watching him without alarm, without recognition, without hope. 'T'onsiba,' he said. 'Fonsiba. Are you all right?'

'I'm free,' she said. Midnight was a tavern, a livery stable, a big store (that would be where the pension check banked itself as a matter of mutual elimination of bother and fret, he thought) and a little one, a saloon and a blacksmith shop. But there was a bank there too. The president (the owner, for all practical purposes) of it was a translated Mississippian who had been one of Forrest's men too: and his body lightened of the golden belt for the first time since he left home eight days ago, with pencil and paper he multiplied three dollars by twelve months and divided it into one thousand dollars; it would stretch that way over almost twenty-eight years and for twenty-eight years at least she would not starve, the banker promising to send the three dollars himself by a trusty messenger on the fifteenth of each month and put it into her actual hand, and he returned home and that was all because in 1874 his father and his uncle were both dead and the old ledgers never again came down from the shelf above the desk to which his father had returned them for the last time that day in 1869. But he could have completed it:

*Lucas Quintus Carothers McCaslin Beauchamp.*

*Last surviving son and child of Tomey's Terrel*

*and Tennie Beauchamp. March 17, 1874*

except that there was no need: not *Lucius Quintus @c @c @c*, but *Lucas Quintus*, not refusing to be called Lucius, because he simply eliminated that word from the name; not denying, declining the name itself, because he used three quarters of it; but simply taking the name and changing, altering it, making it no longer the white man's but his own, by himself composed, himself selfprogenitive and nominate, by himself ancestored, as, for all the old ledgers

recorded to the contrary, old Carothers himself was

and that was all: 1874 the boy; 1888 the man, repudiated denied and free; 1895 and husband but no father, unwidowed but without a wife, and found long since that no man is ever free and probably could not bear it if he were; married then and living in Jefferson in the little new jerry built bungalow which his wife's father had given them: and one morning Lucas stood suddenly in the doorway of the room where he was reading the Memphis paper and he looked at the paper's dateline and thought *It's his birthday. He's twenty-one today* and Lucas said: 'Whar's the rest of that money old Carothers left? I wants it. All of it.'

that was all: and McCaslin

'More men than that one Buck and Buddy to fumble-heed that truth so mazed for them that spoke it and so confused for them that heard yet still there was 1865:' and he

'But not enough. Not enough of even Father and Uncle Buddy to fumble-heed in even three generations not even three generations fathered by Grandfather not even if there had been nowhere beneath His sight any but Grandfather and so He would not even have needed to elect and choose. But He tried and I know what you will say. That having Himself created them He could have known no more of hope than He could have pride and grief, but He didn't hope He just waited because He had made them: not just because He had set them alive and in motion but because He had already worried with them so long: worried with them so long because He had seen how in individual cases they were capable of anything, any height or depth remembered in mazed incomprehension out of heaven where hell was created too, and so He must admit them or else admit his equal somewhere and so be no longer God and therefore must accept responsibility for what He Himself had done in order to live with Himself in His lonely and paramount heaven. And He probably knew it was vain but He had created them and knew them capable of all things because He had shaped them out of the primal Absolute which contained all and had watched them since in their individual exaltation and baseness, and they themselves not knowing why nor how nor even when: until at last He saw that they were all Grandfather all of them and that even from them the elected and chosen the best the very best He could expect (not hope mind: not hope) would be Bucks and Buddies and not even enough of them and in the third generation not even Bucks and Buddies but—' and McCaslin

'Ah:' and he

'Yes. If He could see Father and Uncle Buddy in Grandfather He must have seen me too. —an Isaac born into a later life than Abraham's and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore

safe declining the altar because maybe this time the exasperated Hand might not supply the kid—' and McCaslin

'Escape:' and he

'All right. Escape.—Until one day He said what you told I'onsiba's husband that afternoon here in this room: *This will do. This is enough*: not in exasperation or rage or even just sick to death as you were sick that day: just *This is enough* and looked about for one last time, for one time more since He had created them, upon this land this South for which He had done so much with woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild winters for men and animals, and saw no hope anywhere and looked beyond it where hope should have been, where to East North and West lay illimitable that whole hopeful continent dedicated as a refuge and sanctuary of liberty and freedom from what you called the old world's worthless evening, and saw the rich descendants of slavers, females of both sexes, to whom the black they shrieked of was another specimen another example like the Brazilian macaw brought home in a cage by a traveller, passing resolutions about horror and outrage in warm and air-proof halls: and the thundering cannonade of politicians earning votes and the medicine-shows of pulpiteers earning Chatauqua fees, to whom the outrage and the injustice were as much abstractions as 'Tariff or Silver or Immortality and who employed the very shackles of its servitude and the sorry rags of its ragalia as they did the other beer and banners and mottoes, redfire and brimstone and sleight-of-hand and musical handsaws: and the whirling wheels which manufactured for a profit the pristine replacements of the shackles and shoddy garments as they wore out, and spun the cotton and made the gins which ginned it and the cars and ships which hauled it, and the men who ran the wheels for that profit and established and collected the taxes it was taxed with and the rates for hauling it and the commissions for selling it: and He could have repudiated them since they were his creation now and forever more throughout all their generations, until not only that old world from which He had rescued them but this new one too which He had revealed and led them to as a sanctuary and refuge were become the same worthless tideless rock cooling in the last crimson evening, except that out of all that empty sound and bootless fury one silence, among that loud and moiling all of them just one simple enough to believe that horror and outrage were first and last simply horror and outrage and crude enough to act upon that, illiterate and had no words for talking or perhaps was just busy and had no time to, one out of them all who did not bother Him with cajolery and adjuration then pleading then threat,

and had not even bothered to inform Him in advance what he was about so that a lesser than He might have even missed the simple act of lifting the long ancestral musket down from the deerhorns above the door, whereupon He said *My name is Brown too* and the other *So is mine* and He *Then mine or yours can't be because I am against it* and the other *So am I* and He triumphantly *Then where are you going with that gun?* and the other told him in one sentence one word and He: amazed: Who knew neither hope nor pride nor grief *But your Association, your Committee, your Officers. Where are your Minutes, your Motions, your Parliamentary Procedures?* and the other *I ain't against them. They are all right I reckon for them that have the time. I am just against the weak because they are niggers being held in bondage by the strong just because they are white.* So He turned once more to this land which He still intended to save because He had done so much for it—' and McCaslin

'What?' and he

'—to these people He was still committed to because they were his creations—' and McCaslin

'Turned back to us? His face to us?' and he

'—whose wives and daughters at least made soups and jellies for them when they were sick, and carried the trays through the mud and the winter too into the stinking cabins, and sat in the stinking cabins and kept fires going until crises came and passed, but that was not enough: and when they were very sick had them carried into the big house itself into the company room itself maybe and nursed them there, which the white man would have done too for any other of his cattle that was sick but at least the man who hired one from a livery wouldn't have, and still that was not enough: so that He said and not in grief either, Who had made them and so could know no more of grief than He could of pride or hope: *Apparently they can learn nothing save through suffering, remember nothing save when underlined in blood—*' and McCaslin

'Ashby' on an afternoon's ride, to call on some remote maiden cousins of his mother or maybe just acquaintances of hers, comes by chance upon a minor engagement of outposts and dismounts and with his crimson-lined cloak for target leads a handful of troops he never saw before against an entrenched position of backwoods-trained riflemen. Lee's battle-order, wrapped maybe about a handful of cigars and doubtless thrown away when the last cigar was smoked, found by a Yankee Intelligence officer on the floor of a saloon behind the Yankee lines after Lee had already divided his forces before Sharpsburg.<sup>8</sup> Jackson<sup>9</sup> on the Plank Road, already rolled up

7. Colonel Turner Ashby, Confederate cavalryman who served under Stonewall Jackson.

8. Known in the North as the Battle of Antietam (September 17, 1862).

9. Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jack-

the flank which Hooker<sup>1</sup> believed could not be turned and, waiting only for night to pass to continue the brutal and incessant slogging which would fling that whole wing back into Hooker's lap where he sat on a front gallery in Chancellorsville drinking rum toddies and telegraphing Lincoln that he had defeated Lee, is shot from among a whole covey of minor officers and in the blind night by one of his own patrols, leaving as next by seniority Stuart,<sup>2</sup> that gallant man born apparently already horsed and sabred and already knowing all there was to know about war except the slogging and brutal stupidity of it: and that same Stuart off raiding Pennsylvania hen-roosts when Lee should have known of all of Meade<sup>3</sup> just where Hancock was on Cemetery Ridge: and Longstreet<sup>4</sup> too at Gettysburg and that same Longstreet shot out of saddle by his own men in the dark by mistake just as Jackson was. His face to us?' and he

'How else have made them fight? Who else but Jacksons and Stuarts and Ashbys and Morgans<sup>5</sup> and Forreests?—the farmers of the central and middle-west, holding land by the acre instead of the tens or maybe even the hundreds, farming it themselves and to no single crop of cotton or tobacco or cane, owning no slaves and needing and wanting none, and already looking toward the Pacific coast, not always as long as two generations there and having stopped where they did stop only through the fortuitous mischance that an ox died or a wagon-axle broke. And the New England mechanics who didn't even own land and measured all things by the weight of water and the cost of turning wheels, and the narrow fringe of traders and shipowners still looking backward across the Atlantic and attached to the continent only by their counting-houses. And those who should have had the alertness to see: the wildcat manipulators of mythical wilderness townsites; and the astuteness to rationalize: the bankers who held the mortgages on the land which the first were only waiting to abandon, and on the railroads and steamboats to carry them still further west, and on the factories and the wheels and the rented tenements those who ran them lived in; and the leisure and scope to comprehend and fear in time and even anticipate: the Boston-bred (even when not born in Boston) spinster, descendants of long lines of similarly-

son (1824–1863), Confederate general, Lee's most trusted lieutenant.

1. Joseph Hooker (1814–1879), Union general, commander of the Army of the Potomac from January through June, 1863.

2. General J. E. B. Stuart (1833–1864), Confederate cavalryman.

3. George Gordon Meade (1815–1872), Union general, succeeded Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac just before the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1–3, 1863), where Union General

Winfield Scott Hancock (1824–1886) distinguished himself by holding Cemetery Ridge in the face of determined Confederate attacks.

4. James Longstreet (1821–1904), Confederate general whose delay in carrying out Lee's order to attack at Gettysburg is held to have cost Lee the battle. He was wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5–6, 1864).

5. John Hunt Morgan (1825–1864), Confederate general.

bred and likewise spinster aunts and uncles whose hands knew no callus except that of the indicting pen, to whom the wilderness itself began at the top of tide and who looked, if at anything other than Beacon Hill, only toward heaven—not to mention all the loud rabble of the camp-followers of pioneers: the bellowing of politicians, the mellifluous choiring of self-styled men of God, the—' and McCaslin

'Here, here. Wait a minute:' And he

'Let me talk now. I'm trying to explain to the head of my family something which I have got to do which I don't quite understand myself, not in justification of it but to explain it if I can. I could say I don't know why I must do it but that I do know I have got to because I have got myself to have to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in. But you are the head of my family. More. I knew a long time ago that I would never have to miss my father, even if you are just finding out that you have missed your son—the drawers of bills and the shavers of notes and the schoolmasters and the self-ordained to teach and lead and all that horde of the semi-literate with a white shirt but no change for it, with one eye on themselves and watching each other with the other one. Who else could have made them fight: could have struck them so aghast with fear and dread as to turn shoulder to shoulder and face one way and even stop talking for a while and even after two years of it keep them still so wrung with terror that some among them would seriously propose moving their very capital into a foreign country lest it be ravaged and pillaged by a people whose entire white male population would have little more than filled any one of their larger cities: except Jackson in the Valley<sup>6</sup> and three separate armies trying to catch him and none of them ever knowing whether they were just retreating from a battle or just running into one, and Stuart riding his whole command entirely around the biggest single armed force this continent ever saw in order to see what it looked like from behind,<sup>7</sup> and Morgan leading a cavalry charge against a stranded man-of-war.<sup>8</sup> Who else could have declared a war against a power with ten times the area and a hundred times the men and a thousand times the resources, except men who could believe that all necessary to conduct a successful war was not acumen nor shrewdness nor politics nor diplomacy nor money nor even integrity and simple arithmetic, but just love of land and courage—'

'And an unblemished and gallant ancestry and the ability to ride a horse,' McCaslin said. 'Don't leave that out.' It was evening now, the tranquil sunset of October mazy with windless woodsmoke. The cotton was long since picked and ginned, and all day now the

6. Shenandoah Valley.

7. Before the Seven Days' Battle (June 26–July 2, 1862) Stuart rode entirely

around McClellan's army.

8. The "man-of-war" was actually a river tug with one gun.

wagons loaded with gathered corn moved between field and crib, processional across the enduring land. 'Well, maybe that's what He wanted. At least, that's what He got.' This time there was no yellowed procession of fading and harmless ledger-pages. This was chronicled in a harsher book, and McCaslin, fourteen and fifteen and sixteen, had seen it and the boy himself had inherited it as Noah's grandchildren had inherited the Flood although they had not been there to see the deluge: that dark corrupt and bloody time while three separate peoples had tried to adjust not only to one another but to the new land which they had created and inherited too and must live in for the reason that those who had lost it were no less free to quit it than those who had gained it were:—those upon whom freedom and equality had been dumped overnight and without warning or preparation or any training in how to employ it or even just endure it and who misused it, not as children would nor yet because they had been so long in bondage and then so suddenly freed, but misused it as human beings always misuse freedom, so that he thought *Apparently there is a wisdom beyond even that learned through suffering necessary for a man to distinguish between liberty and license*; those who had fought for four years and lost to preserve a condition under which that franchise was anomalous and paradox, not because they were opposed to freedom as freedom but for the old reasons for which man (not the generals and politicians but man) has always fought and died in wars: to preserve a status quo or to establish a better future one to endure for his children; and lastly, as if that were not enough for bitterness and hatred and fear, that third race even more alien to the people whom they resembled in pigment and in whom even the same blood ran, than to the people whom they did not,—that race threefold in one and alien even among themselves save for a single fierce will for rapine and pillage, composed of the sons of middleaged Quartermaster lieutenants and Army sutlers and contractors in military blankets and shoes and transport mules, who followed the battles they themselves had not fought and inherited the conquest they themselves had not helped to gain, sanctioned and protected even if not blessed, and left their bones and in another generation would be engaged in a fierce economic competition of small sloven farms with the black men they were supposed to have freed and the white descendants of fathers who had owned no slaves anyway whom they were supposed to have disinherited, and in the third generation would be back once more in the little lost county seats as barbers and garage mechanics and deputy sheriffs and mill- and gin-hands and power-plant firemen, leading, first in mufti then later in an actual formalized regalia of hooded sheets and passwords and fiery Christian symbols, lynching mobs against the race their ances-

tors had come to save: and of all that other nameless horde of speculators in human misery, manipulators of money and politics and land, who follow catastrophe and are their own protection as grasshoppers are and need no blessing and sweat no plow or axe-helve and batten and vanish and leave no bones, just as they derived apparently from no ancestry, no mortal flesh, no act even of passion or even of lust: and the Jew who came without protection too, since after two thousand years he had got out of the habit of being or needing it, and solitary, without even the solidarity of the locusts, and in this a sort of courage since he had come thinking not in terms of simple pillage but in terms of his great-grandchildren, seeking yet some place to establish them to endure even though forever alien: and unblessed: a pariah about the face of the Western earth which twenty centuries later was still taking revenge on him for the fairy tale with which he had conquered it. McCaslin had actually seen it, and the boy even at almost eighty would never be able to distinguish certainly between what he had seen and what had been told him: a lightless and gutted and empty land where women crouched with the huddled children behind locked doors and men armed in sheets and masks rode the silent roads and the bodies of white and black both, victims not so much of hate as of desperation and despair, swung from lonely limbs: and men shot dead in polling-booths with the still wet pen in one hand and the unblotted ballot in the other: and a United States marshal in Jefferson who signed his official papers with a crude cross, an ex-slave called Sickymo, not at all because his ex-owner was a doctor and apothecary but because, still a slave, he would steal his master's grain alcohol and dilute it with water and peddle it in pint bottles from a cache beneath the roots of a big sycamore tree behind the drug store, who had attained his high office because his half-white sister was the concubine of the Federal A.P.M.: and this time McCaslin did not even say Look but merely lifted one hand, not even pointing, not even specifically toward the shelf of ledgers but toward the desk, toward the corner where it sat beside the scuffed patch on the floor where two decades of heavy shoes had stood while the white man at the desk added and multiplied and subtracted. And again he did not need to look because he had seen this himself and, twenty-three years after the Surrender and twenty-four after the Proclamation,<sup>9</sup> was still watching it: the ledgers, new ones now and filled rapidly, succeeding one another rapidly and containing more names than old Carothers or even his father and Uncle Buddy had ever dreamed of; new names and new faces to go with them, among which the old names and faces that even his father and

9. But Lee surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865; Lincoln published the Emancipation Proclama-

tion on September 22, 1862, effective January 1, 1863.



uncle would have recognized, were lost, vanished—Tomey's Terrel dead, and even the tragic and miscast Percival Brownlee, who couldn't keep books and couldn't farm either, found his true niche at last, reappeared in 1862 during the boy's father's absence and had apparently been living on the plantation for at least a month before his uncle found out about it, conducting impromptu revival meetings among Negroes, preaching and leading the singing also in his high sweet true soprano voice and disappeared again on foot and at top speed, not behind but ahead of a body of raiding Federal horse and reappeared for the third and last time in the entourage of a travelling Army paymaster, the two of them passing through Jefferson in a surrey at the exact moment when the boy's father (it was 1866) also happened to be crossing the Square, the surrey and its occupants traversing rapidly that quiet and bucolic scene and even in that fleeting moment, and to others beside the boy's father, giving an illusion of flight and illicit holiday like a man on an excursion during his wife's absence with his wife's personal maid, until Brownlee glanced up and saw his late co-master and gave him one defiant female glance and then broke again, leaped from the surrey and disappeared this time for good, and it was only by chance that McCaslin, twenty years later, heard of him again, an old man now and quite fat, as the well-to-do proprietor of a select New Orleans brothel; and Tennie's Jim gone, nobody knew where, and Fonsiba in Arkansas with her three dollars each month and the scholar-husband with his lenseless spectacles and frock coat and his plans for the spring; and only Lucas was left, the baby, the last save himself of old Carothers' doomed and fatal blood which in the male derivation seemed to destroy all it touched, and even he was repudiating and at least hoping to escape it;—Lucas, the boy of fourteen whose name would not even appear for six years yet among those rapid pages in the bindings new and dustless too since McCaslin lifted them down daily now to write into them the continuation of that record which two hundred years had not been enough to complete, and another hundred would not be enough to discharge; that chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South, twenty-three years after surrender and twenty-four from emancipation—that slow trickle of molasses and meal and meat, of shoes and straw hats and overalls, of plowlines and collars and heel-bolts and buckheads and clevises, which returned each fall as cotton—the two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on: and he

'Yes. Binding them for a while yet, a little while yet. Through and beyond that life and maybe through and beyond the life of that

life's sons and maybe even through and beyond that of the sons of those sons. But not always, because they will endure. They will outlast us because they are—' it was not a pause, barely a falter even, possibly appreciable only to himself, as if he couldn't speak even to McCaslin, even to explain his repudiation, that which to him too, even in the act of escaping (and maybe this was the reality and the truth of his need to escape), was heresy: so that even in escaping he was taking with him more of that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon, because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his widower's house and get a child on her and then dismiss her because she was of an inferior race, and then bequeath a thousand dollars to the infant because he would be dead then and wouldn't have to pay it, than even he had feared. 'Yes. He didn't want to. He had to. Because they will endure. They are better than we are. Stronger than we are. Their vices are vices aped from white men or that white men and bondage have taught them: improvidence and intemperance and evasion—not laziness: evasion: of what white men had set them to, not for their aggrandizement or even comfort but his own—' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on: Promiscuity. Violence. Instability and lack of control. Inability to distinguish between mine and thine—' and he

'How distinguish, when for two hundred years mine did not even exist for them?' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on. And their virtues—' and he

'Yes. Their own. Endurance—' and McCaslin

'So have mules:' and he

'—and pity and tolerance and forbearance and fidelity and love of children—' and McCaslin

'So have dogs:' and he

'—whether their own or not or black or not. And more: what they got not only not from white people but not even despite white people because they had it already from the old free fathers a longer time free than us because we have never been free—' and it was in McCaslin's eyes too, he had only to look at McCaslin's eyes and it was there, that summer twilight seven years ago, almost a week after they had returned from the camp before he discovered that Sam Fathers had told McCaslin: an old bear, fierce and ruthless not just to stay alive but ruthless with the fierce pride of liberty and freedom, jealous and proud enough of liberty and freedom to see it threatened not with fear nor even alarm but almost with joy, seeming deliberately to put it into jeopardy in order to savor it and keep his old strong bones and flesh supple and quick to defend and preserve it; an old man, son of a Negro slave and an Indian king, inheritor on the one hand of the long chronicle of a people who had learned humility through suffering and learned pride through

the endurance which survived the suffering, and on the other side the chronicle of a people even longer in the land than the first, yet who now existed there only in the solitary brotherhood of an old and childless Negro's alien blood and the wild and invincible spirit of an old bear; a boy who wished to learn humility and pride in order to become skillful and worthy in the woods but found himself becoming so skillful so fast that he feared he would never become worthy, because he had not learned humility and pride though he had tried, until one day an old man, who could not have defined either, led him as though by the hand to where an old bear and a little mongrel dog showed him that, by possessing one thing other, he would possess them both; and a little dog, nameless and mongrel and many-fathered, grown yet weighing less than six pounds, who couldn't be dangerous because there was nothing anywhere much smaller, not fierce because that would have been called just noise, not humble because it was already too near the ground to genuflect, and not proud because it would not have been close enough for anyone to discern what was casting that shadow, and which didn't even know it was not going to heaven since they had already decided it had no immortal soul, so that all it could be was brave, even though they would probably call that too just noise. 'And you didn't shoot,' McCaslin said. 'How close were you?'

'I don't know,' he said. 'There was a big wood tick just inside his off hind leg. I saw that. But I didn't have the gun then.'

'But you didn't shoot when you had the gun,' McCaslin said. 'Why?' But McCaslin didn't wait, rising and crossing the room, across the pelt of the bear he had killed two years ago and the bigger one McCaslin had killed before he was born, to the bookcase beneath the mounted head of his first buck, and returned with the book and sat down again and opened it. 'Listen,' he said. He read the five stanzas aloud and closed the book on his finger and looked up. 'All right,' he said. 'Listen,' and read again, but only one stanza this time and closed the book and laid it on the table. 'She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,' McCaslin said: 'Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair.'<sup>1</sup>

'He's talking about a girl,' he said.

'He had to talk about something,' McCaslin said. Then he said, 'He was talking about truth. Truth is one. It doesn't change. It covers all things which touch the heart—honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love. Do you see now?' He didn't know. Somehow it had seemed simpler than that, simpler than somebody talking in a book about a young man and a girl he would never need to grieve over because he could never approach any nearer and would never have to get any further away. He had heard about an old bear

1. Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," ll. 19–20.

*and finally got big enough to hunt it and he hunted it four years and at last met it with a gun in his hands and he didn't shoot. Because a little dog—But he could have shot long before the fyce covered the twenty yards to where the bear waited, and Sam Fathers could have shot at any time during the interminable minute while Old Ben stood on his hind legs over them. . . . He ceased. McCaslin watched him, still speaking, the voice, the words as quiet as the twilight itself was: 'Courage and honor and pride, and pity and love of justice and of liberty. They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds to becomes truth, as far as we know truth. Do you see now?'*

and he could still hear them, intact in this twilight as in that one seven years ago, no louder still because they did not need to be because they would endure: and he had only to look at McCaslin's eyes beyond the thin and bitter smiling, the faint lip-lift which would have had to be called smiling;—his kinsman, his father almost, who had been born too late into the old time and too soon for the new, the two of them juxtaposed and alien now to each other against their ravaged patrimony, the dark and ravaged fatherland still prone and panting from its etherless operation:

'Habet then.—So this land is, indubitably, of and by itself cursed:' and he

'Cursed:' and again McCaslin merely lifted one hand, not even speaking and not even toward the ledgers: so that, as the stereopticon condenses into one instantaneous field the myriad minutiae of its scope, so did that slight and rapid gesture establish in the small cramped and cluttered twilight room not only the ledgers but the whole plantation in its mazed and intricate entirety—the land, the fields and what they represented in terms of cotton ginned and sold, the men and women whom they fed and clothed and even paid a little cash money at Christmas-time in return for the labor which planted and raised and picked and ginned the cotton, the machinery and mules and gear with which they raised it and their cost and upkeep and replacement—that whole edifice intricate and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even yet with at times downright savagery not only to the human beings but the valuable animals too, yet solvent and efficient and, more than that: not only still intact but enlarged, increased: brought still intact by McCaslin, himself little more than a child then, through and out of the debacle and chaos of twenty years ago where hardly one in ten survived, and enlarged and increased and would continue so, solvent and efficient and intact and still increasing so long as McCaslin and his McCaslin successors lasted, even though their surnames might not even be Edmonds then: and he

'Habet too. Because that's it: not the land, but us. Not only the blood, but the name too; not only its color but its designation: Edmonds, white, but, a female line, could have no other but the name his father bore; Beauchamp, the elder line and the male one, but, black, could have had any name he liked and no man would have cared, except the name his father bore who had no name—' and McCaslin

'And since I know too what you know I will say now, once more let me say it: And one other, and in the third generation too, and the male, the eldest, the direct and sole and white and still McCaslin even, father to son to son—' and he

'I am free:' and this time McCaslin did not even gesture, no inference of fading pages, no postulation of the stereoptic whole, but the frail and iron thread strong as truth and impervious as evil and longer than life itself and reaching beyond record and patrimony both to join him with the lusts and passions, the hopes and dreams and griefs, of bones whose names while still fleshed and capable even old Carothers' grandfather had never heard: and he:

'And of that too:' and McCaslin

'Chosen, I suppose (I will concede it) out of all your time by Him, as you say Buck and Buddy were from theirs. And it took Him a bear and an old man and four years just for you. And it took you fourteen years to reach that point and about that many, maybe more, for Old Ben, and more than seventy for Sam Fathers. And you are just one. How long then? How long?' and he

'It will be long. I have never said otherwise. But it will be all right because they will endure—' and McCaslin

'And anyway, you will be free.—No, not now nor ever, we from them nor they from us. So I repudiate too. I would deny even if I knew it were true. I would have to. Even you can see that I could do no else. I am what I am; I will be always what I was born and have always been. And more than me. More than me, just as there were more than Buck and Buddy in what you called His first plan which failed:' and he

'And more than me:' and McCaslin

'No. Not even you. Because mark. You said how on that instant when Ikkemotubbe realized that he could sell the land to Grandfather, it ceased forever to have been his. All right; go on: Then it belonged to Sam Fathers, old Ikkemotubbe's son. And who inherited from Sam Fathers, if not you? co-heir perhaps with Boon, if not of his life maybe, at least of his quitting it?' and he

'Yes. Sam Fathers set me free.'

and Isaac McCaslin, not yet Uncle Ike, a long time yet before he would be uncle to half a county and still father to none, living in one small cramped fireless rented room in a Jefferson boarding-

house where petit juries were domiciled during court terms and itinerant horse- and mule-traders stayed, with his kit of brand-new carpenter's tools and the shotgun McCaslin had given him with his name engraved in silver and old General Compson's compass (and, when the General died, his silver-mounted horn too) and the iron cot and mattress and the blankets which he would take each fall into the woods for more than sixty years and the bright tin coffee-pot

there had been a legacy, from his Uncle Hubert Beauchamp, his godfather, that bluff burly roaring childlike man from whom Uncle Buddy had won Tomey's Terrel's wife Tennie in the poker-game in 1859—'possible strait against three Treys in sight Not called'; no pale sentence or paragraph scrawled in cringing fear of death by a weak and trembling hand as a last desperate sop flung backward at retribution, but a Legacy, a Thing, possessing weight to the hand and bulk to the eye and even audible: a silver cup filled with gold pieces and wrapped in burlap and sealed with his godfather's ring in the hot wax, which (intact still) even before his Uncle Hubert's death and long before his own majority, when it would be his, had become not only a legend but one of the family lares.<sup>2</sup> After his father's and his Uncle Hubert's sister's marriage they moved back into the big house, the tremendous cavern which old Carothers had started and never finished, cleared the remaining Negroes out of it and with his mother's dowry completed it, at least the rest of the windows and doors and moved into it, all of them save Uncle Buddy who declined to leave the cabin he and his twin had built, the move being the bride's notion and more than just a notion, and none ever to know if she really wanted to live in the big house or if she knew beforehand that Uncle Buddy would refuse to move: and two weeks after his birth in 1867, the first time he and his mother came down stairs one night, and the silver cup sitting on the cleared dining-room table beneath the bright lamp, and while his mother and his father and McCaslin and Tennie (his nurse: carrying him)—all of them again but Uncle Buddy—watched, his Uncle Hubert rang one by one into the cup the bright and glinting mintage and wrapped it into the burlap envelope and heated the wax and sealed it and carried it back home with him where he lived alone now without even his sister either to hold him down as McCaslin said or to try to raise him up as Uncle Buddy said, and (dark times then in Mississippi) Uncle Buddy said most of the niggers gone and the ones that didn't go even Hub Beauchamp could not have wanted: but the dogs remained and Uncle Buddy said Beauchamp fiddled while Nero fox-hunted

they would go and see it there; at last his mother would prevail

2. Household gods.

and they would depart in the surrey, once more all save Uncle Buddy and McCaslin to keep Uncle Buddy company, until one winter Uncle Buddy began to fail and from then on it was himself, beginning to remember now, and his mother and Tennie and Tomey's Terrel to drive: the twenty-two miles into the next county, the twin gateposts on one of which McCaslin could remember the half-grown boy blowing a fox-horn at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time and jumping down to open to any passer who happened to hear it, but where there were no gates at all now, the shabby and overgrown entrance to what his mother still insisted that people call Warwick because her brother was, if truth but triumphed and justice but prevailed, the rightful earl of it, the paintless house which outwardly did not change but which on the inside seemed each time larger because he was too little to realize then that there was less and less in it of the fine furnishings, the rosewood and mahogany and walnut, which for him had never existed anywhere anyway save in his mother's tearful lamentations, and the occasional piece small enough to be roped somehow onto the rear or the top of the carriage on their return (And he remembered this, he had seen it: an instant, a flash, his mother's soprano 'Even my dress! Even my dress!' loud and outraged in the barren unswept hall; a face young and female and even lighter in color than Tomey's Terrel's for an instant in a closing door; a swirl, a glimpse of the silk gown and the flick and glint of an ear-ring: an apparition rapid and tawdry and illicit, yet somehow even to the child, the infant still almost, breathless and exciting and evocative: as though, like two limpid and pellucid streams meeting, the child which he still was had made serene and absolute and perfect rapport and contact through that glimpsed nameless illicit hybrid female flesh with the boy which had existed at that stage of inviolable and immortal adolescence in his uncle for almost sixty years; the dress, the face, the ear-rings gone in that same aghast flash and his uncle's voice: 'She's my cook! She's my new cook! I had to have a cook, didn't I?' then the uncle himself, the face alarmed and aghast too yet still innocently and somehow even indomitably of a boy, they retreating in their turn now, back to the front gallery, and his uncle again, pained and still amazed, in a sort of desperate resurgence if not of courage at least of self-assertion: 'They're free now; They're folks too just like we are!' and his mother: 'That's why! That's why! My mother's house! Defiled! Defiled!' and his uncle: 'Damn it, Sibbey, at least give her time to pack her grip:' then over, finished, the loud uproar and all, himself and Tennie and he remembered Tennie's inscrutable face at the broken shutterless window of the bare room which had once been the parlor while they watched, hurrying down the lane at a stumbling trot, the routed compounder of his uncle's uxory: the back,

the nameless face which he had seen only for a moment, the once-hooped dress ballooning and flapping below a man's overcoat, the worn heavy carpet-bag jouncing and banging against her knee, routed and in retreat true enough and in the empty lane, solitary, young-looking, and forlorn, yet withal still exciting and evocative and wearing still the silken banner captured inside the very citadel of respectability, and unforgettable.)

the cup, the sealed inscrutable burlap, sitting on the shelf in the locked closet, Uncle Hubert unlocking the door and lifting it down and passing it from hand to hand: his mother, his father, McCaslin and even Tennie, insisting that each take it in turn and heft it for weight and shake it again to prove the sound, Uncle Hubert himself standing spraddled before the cold unswept hearth in which the very bricks themselves were crumbling into a litter of soot and dust and mortar and the droppings of chimney-sweeps, still roaring and still innocent and still indomitable: and for a long time he believed nobody but himself had noticed that his uncle now put the cup only into his hands, unlocked the door and lifted it down and put it into his hands and stood over him until he had shaken it obediently until it sounded then took it from him and locked it back into the closet before anyone else could have offered to touch it, and even later, when competent not only to remember but to rationalize, he could not say what it was or even if it had been anything because the parcel was still heavy and still rattled, not even when, Uncle Buddy dead and his father, at last and after almost seventy-five years in bed after the sun rose, said: 'Go get that damn cup. Bring that damn Hub Beauchamp too if you have to:' because it still rattled though his uncle no longer put it even into his hands now but carried it himself from one to the other, his mother, McCaslin, Tennie, shaking it before each in turn, saying: 'Hear it? Hear it?' his face still innocent, not quite baffled but only amazed and not very amazed and still indomitable:

and, his father and Uncle Buddy both gone now, one day without reason or any warning the almost completely empty house in which his uncle and Tennie's ancient and quarrelsome great-grandfather (who claimed to have seen Lafayette and McCaslin said in another ten years would be remembering God) lived, cooked and slept in one single room, burst into peaceful conflagration, a tranquil instantaneous sourceless unanimity of combustion, walls floors and roof: at sunup it stood where his uncle's father had built it sixty years ago, at sundown the four blackened and smokeless chimneys rose from a light white powder of ashes and a few charred ends of planks which did not even appear to have been very hot: and out of the last of evening, the last one of the twenty-two miles, on the old white mare which was the last of that stable which McCaslin



remembered, the two old men riding double up to the sister's door, the one wearing his fox-horn on its braided deerhide thong and the other carrying the burlap parcel wrapped in a shirt, the tawny wax-daubed shapeless lump sitting again and on an almost identical shelf and his uncle holding the half-opened door now, his hand not only on the knob but one foot against it and the key waiting in the other hand, the face urgent and still not baffled but still and even indomitably not very amazed and himself standing in the half-opened door looking quietly up at the burlap shape, become almost three times its original height and a good half less than its original thickness, and turning away, and he would remember not his mother's look this time nor yet Tennie's inscrutable expression but McCaslin's dark and aquiline face grave insufferable and bemused:

then one night they waked him and fetched him still half-asleep into the lamp light, the smell of medicine which was familiar by now in that room and the smell of something else which he had not smelled before and knew at once and would never forget, the pillow, the worn and ravaged face from which looked out still the boy innocent and immortal and amazed and urgent, looking at him and trying to tell him until McCaslin moved and leaned over the bed and drew from the top of the night shirt the big iron key on the greasy cord which suspended it, the eyes saying Yes Yes Yes now, and cut the cord and unlocked the closet and brought the parcel to the bed, the eyes still trying to tell him even when he took the parcel so that was still not it, the hands still clinging to the parcel even while relinquishing it, the eyes more urgent than ever trying to tell him but they never did; and he was ten and his mother was dead too and McCaslin said, 'You are almost halfway now. You might as well open it:' and he: 'No. He said twenty-one:' and he was twenty-one and McCaslin shifted the bright lamp to the center of the cleared dining-room table and set the parcel beside it and laid his open knife beside the parcel and stood back with that expression of old grave intolerant and repudiating and he lifted it, the burlap lump which fifteen years ago had changed its shape completely overnight, which shaken gave forth a thin weightless not-quite-musical curiously muffled clatter, the bright knife-blade hunting amid the mazed intricacy of string, the knobby gouts of wax bearing his uncle's Beauchamp seal rattling onto the table's polished top and, standing amid the collapse of burlap folds, the unstained tin coffee-pot still brand new, the handful of copper coins and now he knew what had given them the muffled sound: a collection of minutely folded scraps of paper sufficient almost for a rat's nest, of good linen bond, of the crude ruled paper such as Negroes use, of raggedly-torn ledger-pages and the margins of newspapers and once the paper label from a new pair of overalls, all

dated and all signed, beginning with the first one not six months after they had watched him seal the silver cup into the burlap on this same table in this same room by the light even of this same lamp almost twenty-one years ago:

*I owe my Nephew Isaac Beauchamp McCaslin five  
(5) pieces Gold which I.O.U constitutes My note of  
hand with Interest at 5 percent.*

*Hubert Fitz-Hubert Beauchamp  
at Warwick 27 Nov 1867*

and he: 'Anyway he called it Warwick:' once at least, even if no more. But there was more:

*Isaac 24 Dec 1867 I.O.U. 2 pieces Gold H.Fh.B.  
I.O.U. Isaac 1 piece Gold 1 Jan 1868 H.Fh.B.*

then five again then three then one then one then a long time and what dream, what dreamed splendid recoup, not of any injury or betrayal of trust because it had been merely a loan: nay, a partnership:

*I.O.U. Beauchamp McCaslin or his heirs twenty-  
five (25) pieces Gold This & All preceeding con-  
stituting My notes of hand at twenty (20) per-  
centum compounded annually. This date of 19th  
January 1873*

*Beauchamp*

no location save that in time and signed by the single not name but word as the old proud earl himself might have scrawled Nevile: and that made forty-three and he could not remember himself of course but the legend had it at fifty, which balanced: one: then one: then one: then one and then the last three and then the last chit, dated after he came to live in the house with them and written in the shaky hand not of a beaten old man because he had never been beaten to know it but of a tired old man maybe and even at that tired only on the outside and still indomitable, the simplicity of the last one the simplicity not of resignation but merely of amazement, like a simple comment or remark, and not very much of that:

*One silver cup. Hubert Beauchamp*

and McCaslin: 'So you have plenty of coppers anyway. But they are still not old enough yet to be either rarities or heirlooms. So you will have to take the money:' except that he didn't hear McCaslin, standing quietly beside the table and looking peacefully at the coffee-pot and the pot sitting one night later on the mantel above what was not even a fireplace in the little cramped ice-like

room in Jefferson as McCaslin tossed the folded banknotes onto the bed and, still standing (there was nowhere to sit save on the bed) did not even remove his hat and overcoat: and he

‘As a loan. From you. This one:’ and McCaslin

‘You can’t. I have no money that I can lend to you. And you will have to go to the bank and get it next month because I won’t bring it to you:’ and he could not hear McCaslin now either, looking peacefully at McCaslin, his kinsman, his father almost yet no kin now as, at the last, even fathers and sons are no kin: and he

‘It’s seventeen miles, horseback and in the cold. We could both sleep here:’ and McCaslin

‘Why should I sleep here in my house when you won’t sleep yonder in yours?’ and gone, and he looking at the bright rustless unstained tin and thinking, and not for the first time, how much it takes to compound a man (Isaac McCaslin for instance) and of the devious intricate choosing yet unerring path that man’s (Isaac McCaslin’s for instance) spirit takes among all that mass to make him at last what he is to be, not only to the astonishment of them (the ones who sired the McCaslin who sired his father and Uncle Buddy and their sister, and the ones who sired the Beauchamp who sired his Uncle Hubert and his Uncle Hubert’s sister) who believed they had shaped him, but to Isaac McCaslin too

as a loan and used it though he would not have had to: Major de Spain offered him a room in his house as long as he wanted it and asked nor would ever ask any question, and old General Compson more than that, to take him into his own room, to sleep in half of his own bed and more than Major de Spain because he told him baldly why: ‘You sleep with me and before this winter is out, I’ll know the reason. You’ll tell me. Because I don’t believe you just quit. It looks like you just quit but I have watched you in the woods too much and I don’t believe you just quit even if it does look damn like it:’ using it as a loan, paid his board and rent for a month and bought the tools, not simply because he was good with his hands because he had intended to use his hands and it could have been with horses, and not in mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene,<sup>3</sup> as the young gambler buys a spotted shirt because the old gambler won in one yesterday, but (without the arrogance of false humility and without the false humbleness of pride, who intended to earn his bread, didn’t especially want to earn it but had to earn it and for more than just bread) because if the Nazarene had found carpentering good for the life and ends He had assumed and elected to serve, it would be all right too for Isaac McCaslin even though Isaac McCaslin’s ends, although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would be always incomprehen-

3. Jesus of Nazareth.

sible to him, and his life, invincible enough in its needs, if he could have helped himself, not being the Nazarene, he would not have chosen it: and paid it back. He had forgotten the thirty dollars which McCaslin put into the bank in his name each month, fetched it in to him and flung it onto the bed that first one time but no more; he had a partner now or rather he was the partner: a blasphemous profane clever old dipsomaniac who had built blockade-runners in Charleston in '62 and '63 and had been a ship's carpenter since and appeared in Jefferson two years ago, nobody knew from where nor why, and spent a good part of his time since recovering from delirium tremens in the jail; they had put a new roof on the stable of the bank's president and (the old man in jail again still celebrating that job) he went to the bank to collect for it and the president said, 'I should borrow from you instead of paying you:' and it had been seven months now and he remembered for the first time, two-hundred-and-ten dollars, and this was the first job of any size and when he left the bank the account stood at twenty, two-forty to balance, only twenty dollars more to go, then it did balance though by then the total had increased to three hundred and thirty and he said, 'I will transfer it now:' and the president said, 'I can't do that. McCaslin told me not to. Haven't you got another initial you could use and open another account?' but that was all right, the coins the silver and the bills as they accumulated knotted into a handkerchief and the coffee-pot wrapped in an old shirt as when Tennie's great-grandfather had fetched it from Warwick eighteen years ago, in the bottom of the iron-bound trunk which old Carothers had brought from Carolina and his landlady said, 'Not even a lock! And you don't even lock your door, not even when you leave!' and himself looking at her as peacefully as he had looked at McCaslin that first night in this same room, no kin to him at all yet more than kin as those who serve you even for pay are your kin and those who injure you are more than brother or wife

and he had the wife now; got the old man out of jail and fetched him to the rented room and sobered him by superior strength, did not even remove his own shoes for twenty-four hours, got him up and got food into him and they built the barn this time from the ground up and he married her: an only child, a small girl yet curiously bigger than she seemed at first, solider perhaps, with dark eyes and a passionate heart-shaped face, who had time even on that farm to watch most of the day while he sawed timbers to the old man's measurements: and she: 'Papa told me about you. That farm is really yours, isn't it?' and he

'And McCaslin's:' and she

'Was there a will leaving half of it to him?' and he

'There didn't need to be a will. His grandmother was my father's

sister. We were the same as brothers:' and she

'You are the same as second cousins and that's all you ever will be. But I don't suppose it matters:' and they were married, they were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth's long chronicle, his too because each must share with another in order to come into it, and in the sharing they become one: for that while, one: for that little while at least, one: indivisible, that while at least irrevocable and unrecoverable, living in a rented room still but for just a little while and that room wall-less and topless and floorless in glory for him to leave each morning and return to at night; her father already owned the lot in town and furnished the material and he and his partner would build it, her dowry from one: her wedding-present from three, she not to know it until the bungalow was finished and ready to be moved into and he never know who told her, not her father and not his partner and not even in drink though for a while he believed that, himself coming home from work and just time to wash and rest a moment before going down to supper, entering no rented cubicle since it would still partake of glory even after they would have grown old and lost it: and he saw her face then, just before she spoke: 'Sit down:' the two of them sitting on the bed's edge, not even touching yet, her face strained and terrible, her voice a passionate and expiring whisper of immeasurable promise: 'I love you. You know I love you. When are we going to move?' and he

'I didn't—I didn't know—Who told you—' the hot fierce palm clapped over his mouth, crushing his lips into his teeth, the fierce curve of fingers digging into his cheek and only the palm slackened off enough for him to answer:

'The farm. Our farm. Your farm:' and he

'I——' then the hand again, finger and palm, the whole enveloping weight of her although she still was not touching him save the hand, the voice: 'No! No!' and the fingers themselves seeming to follow through the cheek the impulse to speech as it died in his mouth, then the whisper, the breath again, of love and of incredible promise, the palm slackening again to let him answer:

'When?' and he

'I——' then she was gone, the hand too, standing, her back to him and her head bent, the voice so calm now that for an instant it seemed no voice of hers that he ever remembered: "Stand up and turn your back and shut your eyes:' and repeated before he understood and stood himself with his eyes shut and heard the bell ring for supper below stairs, and the calm voice again: 'Lock the door:' and he did so and leaned his forehead against the cold wood, his eyes closed, hearing his heart and the sound he had begun to

hear before he moved until it ceased and the bell rang again below stairs and he knew it was for them this time, and he heard the bed and turned and he had never seen her naked before, he had asked her to once, and why: that he wanted to see her naked because he loved her and he wanted to see her looking at him naked because he loved her, but after that he never mentioned it again, even turning his face when she put the nightgown on over her dress to undress at night and putting the dress on over the gown to remove it in the morning, and she would not let him get into bed beside her until the lamp was out and even in the heat of summer she would draw the sheet up over them both before she would let him turn to her: and the landlady came up the stairs up the hall and rapped on the door and then called their names but she didn't move, lying still on the bed outside the covers, her face turned away on the pillow, listening to nothing, thinking of nothing, not of him anyway he thought: then the landlady went away and she said, "Take off your clothes:" her head still turned away, looking at nothing, thinking of nothing, waiting for nothing, not even him, her hand moving as though with volition and vision of its own, catching his wrist at the exact moment when he paused beside the bed so that he never paused but merely changed the direction of moving, downward now, the hand drawing him and she moved at last, shifted, a movement one single complete inherent not practiced and one time older than man, looking at him now, drawing him still downward with the one hand down and down and he neither saw nor felt it shift, palm flat against his chest now and holding him away with the same apparent lack of any effort or any need for strength, and not looking at him now, she didn't need to, the chaste woman, the wife, already looked upon all the men who ever rutted and now her whole body had changed, altered, he had never seen it but once and now it was not even the one he had seen but composite of all woman-flesh since man that ever of its own will reclined on its back and opened, and out of it somewhere, without any movement of lips even, the dying and invincible whisper: 'Promise:' and he

'Promise?'

'The farm.' He moved. He had moved, the hand shifting from his chest once more to his wrist, grasping it, the arm still lax and only the light increasing pressure of the fingers as though arm and hand were a piece of wire cable with one looped end, only the hand tightening as he pulled against it. 'No,' he said. 'No:' and she was not looking at him still but not like the other, but still the hand. 'No, I tell you. I won't. I can't Never:' and still the hand and he said, for the last time, he tried to speak clearly and he knew it was still gently and he thought, *She already knows more than I with all the man-listening in camps where there was nothing to read*

*ever even heard of. They are born already bored with what a boy approaches only at fourteen and fifteen with blundering and aghast trembling: 'I can't. Not ever. Remember:' and still the steady and invincible hand and he said 'Yes' and he thought, *She is lost. She was born lost. We were all born lost* then he stopped thinking and even saying Yes, it was like nothing he had ever dreamed, let alone heard in mere man-talking until after a no-time he returned and lay spent on the insatiate immemorial beach and again with a movement one time more older than man she turned and freed herself and on their wedding night she had cried and he thought she was crying now at first, into the tossed and wadded pillow, the voice coming from somewhere between the pillow and the cachinnation: 'And that's all. That's all from me. If this don't get you that son you talk about, it won't be mine:' lying on her side, her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing*

## V

He went back to the camp one more time before the lumber company moved in and began to cut the timber. Major de Spain himself never saw it again. But he made them welcome to use the house and hunt the land whenever they liked, and in the winter following the last hunt when Sam Fathers and Lion died, General Compson and Walter Ewell invented a plan to incorporate themselves, the old group, into a club and lease the camp and the hunting privileges of the woods—an invention doubtless of the somewhat childish old General but actually worthy of Boon Hogganbeck himself. Even the boy, listening, recognised it for the subterfuge it was: to change the leopard's spots when they could not alter the leopard, a baseless and illusory hope to which even McCaslin seemed to subscribe for a while, that once they had persuaded Major de Spain to return to the camp he might revoke himself, which even the boy knew he would not do. And he did not. The boy never knew what occurred when Major de Spain declined. He was not present when the subject was broached and McCaslin never told him. But when June came and the time for the double birthday celebration there was no mention of it and when November came no one spoke of using Major de Spain's house and he never knew whether or not Major de Spain knew they were going on the hunt though without doubt old Ash probably told him: he and McCaslin and General Compson (and that one was the General's last hunt too) and Walter and Boon and Tennie's Jim and old Ash loaded two wagons and drove two days and almost forty miles beyond any country the boy had ever seen before and lived in tents for the two weeks. And the next spring they heard (not from Major de Spain) that he had sold the timber-rights to a Memphis lumber company and in June the boy came to town with McCaslin one

Saturday and went to Major de Spain's office—the big, airy, book-lined, second-storey room with windows at one end opening upon the shabby hinder purlieus of stores and at the other a door giving onto the railed balcony above the Square, with its curtained alcove where sat a cedar water-bucket and a sugar-bowl and spoon and tumbler and a wicker-covered demijohn<sup>4</sup> of whisky, and the bamboo-and-paper punkah<sup>5</sup> swinging back and forth above the desk while old Ash in a tilted chair beside the entrance pulled the cord.

"Of course," Major de Spain said. "Ash will probably like to get off in the woods himself for a while, where he won't have to eat Daisy's cooking. Complain about it, anyway. Are you going to take anybody with you?"

"No sir," he said. "I thought that maybe Boon—" For six months now Boon had been town-marshal at Hoke's; Major de Spain had compounded with the lumber company—or perhaps compromised was closer, since it was the lumber company who had decided that Boon might be better as a town-marshal than head of a logging gang.

"Yes," Major de Spain said. "I'll wire him today. He can meet you at Hoke's. I'll send Ash on by the train and they can take some food in and all you will have to do will be to mount your horse and ride over."

"Yes sir," he said. "Thank you." And he heard his voice again. He didn't know he was going to say it yet he did know, he had known it all the time: "Maybe if you . . ." His voice died. It was stopped, he never knew how because Major de Spain did not speak and it was not until his voice ceased that Major de Spain moved, turned back to the desk and the papers spread on it and even that without moving because he was sitting at the desk with a paper in his hand when the boy entered, the boy standing there looking down at the short plumpish gray-haired man in sober fine broadcloth and an immaculate glazed shirt whom he was used to seeing in boots and muddy corduroy, unshaven, sitting the shaggy powerful long-hocked mare with the worn Winchester<sup>6</sup> carbine across the saddlebow and the great blue dog standing motionless as bronze at the stirrup, the two of them in that last year and to the boy anyway coming to resemble one another somehow as two people competent for love or for business who have been in love or in business together for a long time sometimes do. Major de Spain did not look up again.

"No. I will be too busy. But good luck to you. If you have it, you

4. A bottle holding from one to ten gallons, and usually encased in a wicker covering.

5. A large fan suspended from the ceiling, actuated by a cord in the hands of

a servant assigned to the task. It originated in India.

6. The carbine was primarily intended as a cavalry rifle. Oliver F. Winchester (1810-1880) became the first manufacturer of repeating rifles.



might bring me a young squirrel."

"Yes sir," he said. "I will."

He rode his mare, the three-year-old filly he had bred and raised and broken himself. He left home a little after midnight and six hours later, without even having sweated her, he rode into Hoke's, the tiny log-line junction which he had always thought of as Major de Spain's property too although Major de Spain had merely sold the company (and that many years ago) the land on which the side-tracks and loading-platforms and the commissary store stood, and looked about in shocked and grieved amazement even though he had had forewarning and had believed himself prepared: a new planing-mill already half completed which would cover two or three acres and what looked like miles and miles of stacked steel rails red with the light bright rust of newness and of piled crossties sharp with creosote, and wire corrals and feeding-troughs for two hundred mules at least and the tents for the men who drove them; so that he arranged for the care and stabling of his mare as rapidly as he could and did not look any more, mounted into the log-train caboose with his gun and climbed into the cupola and looked no more save toward the wall of wilderness ahead within which he would be able to hide himself from it once more anyway.

Then the little locomotive shrieked and began to move: a rapid churning of exhaust, a lethargic deliberate clashing of slack couplings traveling backward along the train, the exhaust changing to the deep slow clapping bites of power as the caboose too began to move and from the cupola he watched the train's head complete the first and only curve in the entire line's length and vanish into the wilderness, dragging its length of train behind it so that it resembled a small dingy harmless snake vanishing into weeds, drawing him with it too until soon it ran once more at its maximum clattering speed between the twin walls of unaxed wilderness as of old. It had been harmless once. Not five years ago Walter Ewell had shot a six-point buck from this same moving caboose, and there was the story of the half-grown bear: the train's first trip in to the cutting thirty miles away, the bear between the rails, its rear end elevated like that of a playing puppy while it dug to see what sort of ants or bugs they might contain or perhaps just to examine the curious symmetrical squared barkless logs which had appeared apparently from nowhere in one endless mathematical line overnight, still digging until the driver on the braked engine not fifty feet away blew the whistle at it, whereupon it broke frantically and took the first tree it came to: an ash sapling not much bigger than a man's thigh and climbed as high as it could and clung there, its head ducked between its arms as a man (a woman perhaps) might have done while the brakeman threw chunks of ballast at it, and when the engine

returned three hours later with the first load of outbound logs the bear was halfway down the tree and once more scrambled back up as high as it could and clung again while the train passed and was still there when the engine went in again in the afternoon and still there when it came back out at dusk; and Boon had been in Hoke's with the wagon after a barrel of flour that noon when the train-crew told about it and Boon and Ash, both twenty years younger then, sat under the tree all that night to keep anybody from shooting it and the next morning Major de Spain had the log-train held at Hoke's and just before sundown on the second day, with not only Boon and Ash but Major de Spain and General Compson and Walter and McCaslin, twelve then, watching, it came down the tree after almost thirty-six hours without even water and McCaslin told him how for a minute they thought it was going to stop right there at the barrow-pit where they were standing and drink, how it looked at the water and paused and looked at them and at the water again, but did not, gone, running, as bears run, the two sets of feet, front and back, tracking two separate though parallel courses.

It had been harmless then. They would hear the passing log-train sometimes from the camp; sometimes, because nobody bothered to listen for it or not. They would hear it going in, running light and fast, the light clatter of the trucks, the exhaust of the diminutive locomotive and its shrill peanut-parcher whistle flung for one petty moment and absorbed by the brooding and inattentive wilderness without even an echo. They would hear it going out, loaded, not quite so fast now yet giving its frantic and toylike illusion of crawling speed, not whistling now to conserve steam, flinging its bitten laboring miniature puffing into the immemorial woods-face with frantic and bootless vainglory, empty and noisy and puerile, carrying to no destination or purpose sticks which left nowhere any scar or stump as the child's toy loads and transports and unloads its dead sand and rushes back for more, tireless and unceasing and rapid yet never quite so fast as the Hand which plays with it moves the toy burden back to load the toy again. But it was different now. It was the same train, engine cars and caboose, even the same enginemen brakeman and conductor to whom Boon, drunk then sober then drunk again then fairly sober once more all in the space of fourteen hours, had bragged that day two years ago about what they were going to do to Old Ben tomorrow, running with its same illusion of frantic rapidity between the same twin walls of impenetrable and impervious woods, passing the old landmarks, the old game crossings over which he had trailed bucks wounded and not wounded and more than once seen them, anything but wounded, bot' out of the woods and up and across the embankment which bore the rails

7. So in all texts. This could be a misprint for "bolt."

and ties then down and into the woods again as the earthbound supposedly move but crossing as arrows travel, groundless, elongated, three times its actual length and even paler, different in color, as if there were a point between immobility and absolute motion where even mass chemically altered, changing without pain or agony not only in bulk and shape but in color too, approaching the color of wind, yet this time it was as though the train (and not only the train but himself, not only his vision which had seen it and his memory which remembered it but his clothes too, as garments carry back into the clean edgeless blowing of air the lingering effluvium of a sick-room or of death) had brought with it into the doomed wilderness even before the actual axe the shadow and portent of the new mill not even finished yet and the rails and ties which were not even laid; and he knew now what he had known as soon as he saw Hoke's this morning but had not yet thought into words: why Major de Spain had not come back, and that after this time he himself, who had had to see it one time other, would return no more.

Now they were near. He knew it before the engine-driver whistled to warn him. Then he saw Ash and the wagon, the reins without doubt wrapped once more about the brake-lever as within the boy's own memory Major de Spain had been forbidding him for eight years to do, the train slowing, the slackened couplings jolting and clashing again from car to car, the caboose slowing past the wagon as he swung down with his gun, the conductor leaning out above him to signal the engine, the caboose still slowing, creeping, although the engine's exhaust was already slatting in mounting tempo against the unechoing wilderness, the crashing of drawbars once more travelling backward along the train, the caboose picking up speed at last. Then it was gone. It had not been. He could no longer hear it. The wilderness soared, musing, inattentive, myriad, eternal, green; older than any mill-shed, longer than any spurline. "Mr. Boone here yet?" he said.

"He beat me in," Ash said. "Had the wagon loaded and ready for me at Hoke's yistiddy when I got there and setting on the front steps at camp last night when I got in. He already been in the woods since fo daylight this morning. Said he gwine up to the Gum Tree and for you to hunt up that way and meet him." He knew where that was: a single big sweet-gum just outside the woods, in an old clearing; if you crept up to it very quietly this time of year and then ran suddenly into the clearing, sometimes you caught as many as a dozen squirrels in it, trapped, since there was no other tree near they could jump to. So he didn't get into the wagon at all.

"I will," he said.

"I figured you would," Ash said, "I fotch you a box of shells." He

passed the shells down and began to unwrap the lines from the brake-pole.

"How many times up to now do you reckon Major has told you not to do that?" the boy said.

"Do which?" Ash said. Then he said: "And tell Boon Hogganbeck dinner gonter be on the table in a hour and if yawl want any to come on and eat it."

"In an hour?" he said. "It aint nine oclock yet." He drew out his watch and extended it face-toward Ash. "Look." Ash didn't even look at the watch.

"That's town time. You aint in town now. You in the woods."

"Look at the sun then."

"Nemmine the sun too," Ash said. "If you and Boon Hogganbeck want any dinner, you better come on in and get it when I tole you. I aim to get done in that kitchen because I got my wood to chop. And watch your feet. They're crawling."<sup>8</sup>

"I will," he said.

Then he was in the woods, not alone but solitary; the solitude closed about him, green with summer. They did not change, and, timeless, would not, any more than would the green of summer and the fire and rain of fall and the iron cold and sometimes even snow

*the day, the morning when he killed the buck and Sam marked his face with its hot blood, they returned to camp and he remembered old Ash's blinking and disgruntled and even outraged disbelief until at last McCaslin had had to affirm the fact that he had really killed it: and that night Ash sat snarling and unapproachable behind the stove so that Tennie's Jim had to serve the supper and waked them with breakfast already on the table the next morning and it was only half-past one oclock and at last out of Major de Spain's angry cursing and Ash's snarling and sullen rejoinders the fact emerged that Ash not only wanted to go into the woods and shoot a deer also but he intended to and Major de Spain said, 'By God, if we dont let him we will probably have to do the cooking from now on:' and Walter Ewell said, 'Or get up at midnight to eat what Ash cooks:' and since he had already killed his buck for this hunt and was not to shoot again unless they needed meat, he offered his gun to Ash until Major de Spain took command and allotted that gun to Boon for the day and gave Boon's unpredictable pump gun to Ash, with two buckshot shells but Ash said, 'I got shells:' and showed them, four: one buck, one of number three shot for rabbits, two of bird-shot and told one by one their history and their origin and he remembered not Ash's face alone but Major de Spain's and Walter's and General Compson's too, and Ash's voice:*

8. The woodsman's cryptic warning against snakes.

'Shoot? In course they'll shoot! Genl Cawmpson guv me this un'—the buckshot—'right outen the same gun he kilt that big buck with eight years ago. And this un'—it was the rabbit shell: triumphantly—'is oldern thisyer boy!' And that morning he loaded the gun himself, reversing the order: the bird-shot, the rabbit, then the buck so that the buckshot would feed first into the chamber, and himself without a gun, he and Ash walked beside Major de Spain's and Tennie's Jim's horses and the dogs (that was the snow) until they cast and struck, the sweet strong cries ringing away into the muffled falling air and gone almost immediately, as if the constant and un-murmuring flakes had already buried even the unformed echoes beneath their myriad and weightless falling, Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim gone too, whooping on into the woods; and then it was all right, he knew as plainly as if Ash had told him that Ash had now hunted his deer and that even his tender years had been forgiven for having killed one, and they turned back toward home through the falling snow—that is, Ash said, 'Now whut?' and he said, 'This way'—himself in front because, although they were less than a mile from camp, he knew that Ash, who had spent two weeks of his life in the camp each year for the last twenty, had no idea whatever where they were, until quite soon the manner in which Ash carried Boon's gun was making him a good deal more than just nervous and he made Ash walk in front, striding on, talking now, an old man's garrulous monologue beginning with where he was at the moment then of the woods and of camping in the woods and of eating in camps then of eating then of cooking it and of his wife's cooking then briefly of his old wife and almost at once and at length of a new light-colored woman who nursed next door to Major de Spain's and if she didn't watch out who she was switching her tail at he would show her how old was an old man or not if his wife just didn't watch him all the time, the two of them in a game trail through a dense brake of cane and brier which would bring them out within a quarter-mile of camp, approaching a big fallen tree-trunk lying athwart the path and just as Ash, still talking, was about to step over it the bear, the yearling, rose suddenly beyond the log, sitting up, its forearms against its chest and its wrists limply arrested as if it had been surprised in the act of covering its face to pray: and after a certain time Ash's gun yawed jerkily up and he said, 'You haven't got a shell in the barrel yet. Pump it:' but the gun already snicked and he said, 'Pump it. You haven't got a shell in the barrel yet:' and Ash pumped the action and in a certain time the gun steadied again and snicked and he said, 'Pump it:' and watched the buckshot shell jerk, spinning heavily, into the cane. This is the rabbit shot: he thought and the gun snicked and he thought: The next is bird-shot: and he didn't have to say Pump it; he cried,

*'Dont shoot! Dont shoot!' but that was already too late too, the light dry vicious snick! before he could speak and the bear turned and dropped to all-fours and then was gone and there was only the log, the cane, the velvet and constant snow and Ash said, 'Now whut?' and he said, 'This way. Come on:' and began to back away down the path and Ash said, 'I got to find my shells:' and he said, 'Goddamn it, goddamn it, come on:' but Ash leaned the gun against the log and returned and stooped and fumbled among the cane roots until he came back and stooped and found the shells and they rose and at that moment the gun, untouched, leaning against the log six feet away and for that while even forgotten by both of them, roared, bellowed and flamed, and ceased: and he carried it now, pumped out the last mummified shell and gave that one also to Ash and, the action<sup>9</sup> still open, himself carried the gun until he stood it in the corner behind Boon's bed at the camp*

—; summer, and fall, and snow, and wet and sap rife spring in their ordered immortal sequence, the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to the old man born of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief who had been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved: and he would marry someday and they too would own for their brief while that brief unsubstantiated glory which inherently of itself cannot last and hence why glory: and they would, might, carry even the remembrance of it into the time when flesh no longer talks to flesh because memory at least does last: but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife.

He was not going toward the Gum Trec. Actually he was getting farther from it. Time was and not so long ago either when he would not have been allowed here without someone with him, and a little later, when he had begun to learn how much he did not know, he would not have dared be here without someone with him, and later still, beginning to ascertain, even if only dimly, the limits of what he did not know, he could have attempted and carried it through with a compass, not because of any increased belief in himself but because McCaslin and Major de Spain and Walter and General Compson too had taught him at last to believe the compass regardless of what it seemed to state. Now he did not even use the compass but merely the sun and that only subconsciously, yet he could have taken a scaled map and plotted at any time to within a hundred feet of where he actually was; and sure enough, at almost the exact moment when he expected it, the earth began to rise faintly, he passed one of the four concrete markers set down by the lumber company's surveyor to establish the four corners of the plot which

9. The breech mechanism.

Major de Spain had reserved out of the sale, then he stood on the crest of the knoll itself, the four corner-markers all visible now, blanched still even beneath the winter's weathering, lifeless and shockingly alien in that place where dissolution itself was a seething turmoil of ejaculation, tumescence conception and birth, and death did not even exist. After two winters' blanketings of leaves and the floodwaters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves any more at all. But those who would have come this far to find them would not need headstones but would have found them as Sam Fathers himself had taught him to find such: by bearings on trees: and did, almost the first thrust of the hunting knife finding (but only to see if it was still there) the round tin box manufactured for axel-grease and containing now Old Ben's dried mutilated paw, resting above Lion's bones.

He didn't disturb it. He didn't even look for the other grave where he and McCaslin and Major de Spain and Boon had laid Sam's body, along with his hunting horn and his knife and his tobacco-pipe, that Sunday morning two years ago; he didn't have to. He had stepped over it, perhaps on it. But that was all right. *He probably knew I was in the woods this morning long before I got here*, he thought, going on to the tree which had supported one end of the platform where Sam lay when McCaslin and Major de Spain found them—the tree, the other axel-grease tin nailed to the trunk, but weathered, rusted, alien too yet healed already into the wilderness' concordant generality, raising no tuncless note, and empty, long since empty of the food and tobacco he had put into it that day, as empty of that as it would presently be of this which he drew from his pocket—the twist of tobacco, the new bandanna handkerchief, the small paper sack of the peppermint candy which Sam had used to love; that gone too, almost before he had turned his back, not vanished but merely translated into the myriad life which printed the dark mold of these secret and sunless places with delicate fairy tracks, which, breathing and biding and immobile, watched him from beyond every twig and leaf until he moved, moving again, walking on; he had not stopped, he had only paused, quitting the knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression and, being myriad, one: and Old Ben too, Old Ben too; they would give him his paw back even, certainly they would give him his paw back: then the long challenge and the long chase, no heart to be driven and outraged, no flesh to be mauled and bled— Even as he froze himself, he

seemed to hear Ash's parting admonition. He could even hear the voice as he froze, immobile, one foot just taking his weight, the toe of the other just lifted behind him, not breathing, feeling again and as always the sharp shocking inrush from when Isaac McCaslin long yet was not, and so it was fear all right but not fright as he looked down at it. It had not coiled yet and the buzzer had not sounded either, only one thick rapid contraction, one loop cast sideways as though merely for purchase from which the raised head might start slightly backward, not in fright either, not in threat quite yet, more than six feet of it, the head raised higher than his knee and less than his knee's length away, and old, the once-bright markings of its youth dulled now to a monotone concordant too with the wilderness it crawled and lurked: the old one, the ancient and accursed about the earth, fatal and solitary and he could smell it now: the thin sick smell of rotting cucumbers and something else which had no name, evocative of all knowledge and an old weariness and of pariah-hood and of death. At last it moved. Not the head. The elevation of the head did not change as it began to glide away from him, moving erect yet off the perpendicular as if the head and that elevated third were complete and all: an entity walking on two feet and free of all laws of mass and balance and should have been because even now he could not quite believe that all that shift and flow of shadow behind that walking head could have been one snake: going and then gone; he put the other foot down at last and didn't know it, standing with one hand raised as Sam had stood that afternoon six years ago when Sam led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be a child, speaking the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: "Chief," he said: "Grandfather."

He couldn't tell when he first began to hear the sound, because when he became aware of it, it seemed to him that he had been already hearing it for several seconds—a sound as though someone were hammering a gun-barrel against a piece of railroad iron, a sound loud and heavy and not rapid yet with something frenzied about it, as the hammerer were not only a strong man and an earnest one but a little hysterical too. Yet it couldn't be on the log-line because, although the track lay in that direction, it was at least two miles from him and this sound was not three hundred yards away. But even as he thought that, he realised where the sound must be coming from: whoever the man was and whatever he was doing, he was somewhere near the edge of the clearing where the Gum Tree was and where he was to meet Boon. So far, he had been hunting as he advanced, moving slowly and quietly and watching the ground and the trees both. Now he went on, his gun unloaded and the barrel slanted up and back to facilitate its passage through brier and



undergrowth, approaching as it grew louder and louder that steady savage somehow queerly hysterical beating of metal on metal, emerging from the woods, into the old clearing, with the solitary gum tree directly before him. At first glance the tree seemed to be alive with frantic squirrels. There appeared to be forty or fifty of them leaping and darting from branch to branch until the whole tree had become one green maelstrom of mad leaves, while from time to time, singly or in twos and threes, squirrels would dart down the trunk then whirl without stopping and rush back up again as though sucked violently back by the vacuum of their fellows' frenzied vortex. Then he saw Boon, sitting, his back against the trunk, his head bent, hammering furiously at something on his lap. What he hammered with was the barrel of his dismembered gun, what he hammered at was the breech of it. The rest of the gun lay scattered about him in a half-dozen pieces while he bent over the piece on his lap his scarlet and streaming walnut face, hammering the disjointed barrel against the gun-breech with the frantic abandon of a madman. He didn't even look up to see who it was. Still hammering, he merely shouted back at the boy in a hoarse strangled voice:

"Get out of here! Dont touch them! Dont touch a one of them! They're mine!"

1935-1941

1935, 1942

## ERNEST HEMINGWAY

(1898-1961)

Hemingway's compelling inspiration was war, both as a personal and symbolic experience and as a continuing condition of mankind. New readers of the Second World War and beyond still found inspiration in his symbolic ritualism dedicated to the survival of selfhood in the midst of chaos. Hemingway also created a revolution in language which influenced the narrative and dialogue of two generations of novelists. During the last twenty years of his life he published little; as adventurer, hunter, and journalist he sometimes seemed to resemble one of his own created characters. When in 1952 he got it again

"the way it was" in *The Old Man and the Sea*, a nearly flawless short novel, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize (1953) and the Nobel Prize (1954) with a promptness that suggested an overdue recognition.

Born in Oak Park, near Chicago, on July 21, 1898, Ernest Miller Hemingway was the son of a physician who initiated him into the rituals of hunting and fishing in the Michigan north woods; he also gained an early proficiency in football and boxing. Graduated from high school he became a reporter for the *Kansas City Star* in 1917. Within the year he was in volunteer war service with an Amer-

ican ambulance unit in France, gained transfer to combat duty in the Italian Arditi (volunteer infantry) on the Italian front, and was seriously wounded. After the Armistice, with Italian decorations for valor, he returned to newspaper work. In 1920 he covered the Graeco-Turkish war and was appointed a Paris correspondent.

Post-war Paris was thronged with young artists. Intellectual ferment and artistic accomplishment expressed the same spiritual defeat that other expatriate intellectuals sought in escape. In his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), with Gertrude Stein's remark, "You are all a lost generation," as epigraph, such characters as Lady Brett and Jake Barnes, the journalist unmanned by war wounds, expressed in another form the sterile wasteland of Eliot's poem of 1922. His first book, *In Our Time* (1924), was a collection of stories in which Nick Adams is a sort of *alter ego* for the young Hemingway. Hemingway's psychological penetration and originality in plot and dialogue reawakened interest in the short story; his early debt to Sherwood Anderson he acknowledged in a good-natured parody, *Torrents of Spring* (1926).

Two war novels and two uniquely interesting topical books brought Hemingway to the end of his major accomplishment in 1940. *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), based on his Italian service, is a distinguished war novel, although lingering sentiment breaks through the taut economy of the stylized language. Here he rejected the

classic tragic unity in the catastrophic defeat of the lovers, who have hazardedly escaped to safe harbor, only to face the cruel futility of Catherine's fatal accident in childbirth. Dying, she murmurs to Frederick, "I'm not a bit afraid. It's just a dirty trick." The author's naturalistic reinterpretation of fate was consistent. Robert Jordan, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), loses his life for a cause already lost, and in fact not even a genuine cause. All causes in Hemingway's tragic vision are already lost, because that is nature and the way things are; but the losers need not be lost. What distinguished man and gave him salvation was his faithfulness in the ordeal which all are called upon to face—as Macomber must meet the buffalo, and if by some dirty trick he dies anyway, "we owe God a death"; but we can keep the rendezvous like men. Lady Brett knew the code: "It's sort of what we have *instead* of God."

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, his best novel, again love is found, and lost, as it seems, by the callous futility of nature. This episode of the Spanish Revolution is also an unforgettable revelation of the Spanish earth and its people. Spain and the bullfight had appeared in his first novel; later, in *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), he gave an interpretation of the bullfight as ordeal and ritual, "very moral to me because I feel very fine while it is going on and have a feeling of life and death and mortality." The hunt is a comparable ordeal and ritual in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935).

Like Stephen Crane, whom

he admired as the pioneer of the naturalistic war novel, Hemingway embraced the cult of experience. Note his journalistic engagements on behalf of the Spanish loyalists between 1936 and 1940; or again on behalf of liberal causes in the war-torn 40's, as correspondent in China, and in the air over France, and on the Normandy beach. Crane's thirst for life was fatal and Hemingway's nearly as compelling. In *The Green Hills* he asserted his creed "to write as well as I can and learn as I go along. At the same time I have my life \* \* \* which is a damned good life." You could only write "what you truly felt" and never "when there is no water in the well." Of the bullfight he remarked, "I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things and the most fundamental is violent death." Death became, in his fiction, the extreme limit of experience and the final test of the genuine ordeal. Death appears in his writing in violent forms, or understated as "bad luck," or

symbolically projected as mutilation or sterility in Jake Barnes, Nick Adams, and the protagonists of *To Have and Have Not* (1937) and *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950) his two so-called "failures."

Hemingway left his Cuban estate in November, 1960, for a new "last home" in a remote spot near Ketchum, Idaho. During the next eight months he suffered two long illnesses requiring hospitalization. In the early morning of July 2, 1961, standing beside his beloved gun-rack in his home, he died of head wounds resulting from the discharge of his favorite shotgun, in his own hands.

All of Hemingway's novels and topical volumes are mentioned above. *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-nine Stories*, 1938, contains all the stories of *In Our Time*, Paris, 1924, New York, 1925, *Men Without Women*, 1927, and *Winner Take Nothing*, 1933, together with several previously uncollected stories and a play, *The Fifth Column*.

Critical and biographical studies of definitive seriousness are Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer As Artist*, 1952, revised 1956; Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway*, 1952; and Charles A. Fenton, *The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway: The Early Years*, 1954.

## The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber<sup>1</sup>

It was now lunch time and they were all sitting under the double green fly of the dining tent pretending that nothing had happened.

"Will you have lime juice or lemon squash?" Macomber asked.

"I'll have a gimlet,"<sup>2</sup> Robert Wilson told him.

"I'll have a gimlet too. I need something," Macomber's wife said.

"I suppose it's the thing to do," Macomber agreed. "Tell him to make three gimlets."

The mess boy had started them already, lifting the bottles out of the canvas cooling bags that sweated wet in the wind that blew

1. First published in *Cosmopolitan* for September, 1936, and collected in *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-nine Stories* (1938).

2. A drink, popular in British colonial areas, composed of two-thirds gin and one-third lime juice, chilled.

through the trees that shaded the tents.

"What had I ought to give them?" Macomber asked.

"A quid<sup>3</sup> would be plenty," Wilson told him. "You don't want to spoil them."

"Will the headman distribute it?"

"Absolutely."

Francis Macomber had, half an hour before, been carried to his tent from the edge of the camp in triumph on the arms and shoulders of the cook, the personal boys, the skinner and the porters. The gun-bearers had taken no part in the demonstration. When the native boys put him down at the door of his tent, he had shaken all their hands, received their congratulations, and then gone into the tent and sat on the bed until his wife came in. She did not speak to him when she came in and he left the tent at once to wash his face and hands in the portable wash basin outside and go over to the dining tent to sit in a comfortable canvas chair in the breeze and the shade.

"You've got your lion," Robert Wilson said to him, "and a damned fine one too."

Mrs. Macomber looked at Wilson quickly. She was an extremely handsome and well-kept woman of the beauty and social position which had, five years before, commanded five thousand dollars as the price of endorsing, with photographs, a beauty product which she had never used. She had been married to Francis Macomber for eleven years.

"He is a good lion, isn't he?" Macomber said. His wife looked at him now. She looked at both these men as though she had never seen them before.

One, Wilson, the white hunter, she knew she had never truly seen before. He was about middle height with sandy hair, a stubby mustache, a very red face and extremely cold blue eyes with faint white wrinkles at the corners that grooved merrily when he smiled. He smiled at her now and she looked away from his face at the way his shoulders sloped in the loose tunic he wore with the four big cartridges held in loops where the left breast pocket should have been, at his big brown hands, his old slacks, his very dirty boots and back to his red face again. She noticed where the baked red of his face stopped in a white line that marked the circle left by his Stetson hat that hung now from one of the pegs of the tent pole.

"Well, here's to the lion," Robert Wilson said. He smiled at her again and, not smiling, she looked curiously at her husband.

Francis Macomber was very tall, very well built if you did not mind that length of bone, dark, his hair cropped like an oarsman,

3. British slang for one pound in currency.

rather thin-lipped, and was considered handsome. He was dressed in the same sort of safari clothes that Wilson wore except that his were new, he was thirty-five years old, kept himself very fit, was good at court games, had a number of big-game fishing records, and had just shown himself, very publicly, to be a coward.

"Here's to the lion," he said. "I can't ever thank you for what you did."

Margaret, his wife, looked away from him and back to Wilson.

"Let's not talk about the lion," she said.

Wilson looked over at her without smiling and now she smiled at him.

"It's been a very strange day," she said. "Hadn't you ought to put your hat on even under the canvas at noon? You told me that, you know."

"Might put it on," said Wilson.

"You know you have a very red face, Mr. Wilson," she told him and smiled again.

"Drink," said Wilson.

"I don't think so," she said. "Francis drinks a great deal, but his face is never red."

"It's red today," Macomber tried a joke.

"No," said Margaret. "It's mine that's red today. But Mr. Wilson's is always red."

"Must be racial," said Wilson. "I say, you wouldn't like to drop my beauty as a topic, would you?"

"I've just started on it."

"Let's chuck it," said Wilson.

"Conversation is going to be so difficult," Margaret said.

"Don't be silly, Margot," her husband said.

"No difficulty," Wilson said. "Got a damn fine lion."

Margot looked at them both and they both saw that she was going to cry. Wilson had seen it coming for a long time and he dreaded it. Macomber was past dreading it.

"I wish it hadn't happened. Oh, I wish it hadn't happened," she said and started for her tent. She made no noise of crying but they could see that her shoulders were shaking under the rose-colored, sun-proofed shirt she wore.

"Women upset," said Wilson to the tall man. "Amounts to nothing. Strain on the nerves and one thing'n another."

"No," said Macomber. "I suppose that I rate that for the rest of my life now."

"Nonsense. Let's have a spot of the giant killer," said Wilson. "Forget the whole thing. Nothing to it anyway."

"We might try," said Macomber. "I won't forget what you did for me though."

"Nothing," said Wilson. "All nonsense."

So they sat there in the shade where the camp was pitched under some wide-topped acacia trees with a boulder-strewn cliff behind them, and a stretch of grass that ran to the bank of a boulder-filled stream in front with forest beyond it, and drank their just-cool lime drinks and avoided one another's eyes while the boys set the table for lunch. Wilson could tell that the boys all knew about it now and when he saw Macomber's personal boy looking curiously at his master while he was putting dishes on the table he snapped at him in Swahili. The boy turned away with his face blank.

"What were you telling him?" Macomber asked.

"Nothing. Told him to look alive or I'd see he got about fifteen of the best."

"What's that? Lashes?"

"It's quite illegal," Wilson said. "You're supposed to fine them."

"Do you still have them whipped?"

"Oh, yes. They could raise a row if they chose to complain. But they don't. They prefer it to the fines."

"How strange!" said Macomber.

"Not strange, really," Wilson said. "Which would you rather do? Take a good birching or lose your pay?"

Then he felt embarrassed at asking it and before Macomber could answer he went on, "We all take a beating every day, you know, one way or another."

This was no better. "Good God," he thought. "I am a diplomat, aren't I?"

"Yes, we take a beating," said Macomber, still not looking at him. "I'm awfully sorry about that lion business. It doesn't have to go any further, does it? I mean no one will hear about it, will they?"

"You mean will I tell it at the Mathaiga Club?" Wilson looked at him now coldly. He had not expected this. So he's a bloody four-letter man as well as a bloody coward, he thought. I rather liked him too until today. But how is one to know about an American?

"No," said Wilson. "I'm a professional hunter. We never talk about our clients. You can be quite easy on that. It's supposed to be bad form to ask us not to talk though."

He had decided now that to break would be much easier. He would eat, then, by himself and could read a book with his meals. They would eat by themselves. He would see them through the safari<sup>4</sup> on a very formal basis—what was it the French called it? Distinguished consideration—and it would be a damn sight easier than having to go through this emotional trash. He'd insult him and make a good clean break. Then he could read a book with his

4. From the Arabic, originally meaning "journey," but now usually designating a hunting expedition

meals and he'd still be drinking their whisky. That was the phrase for it when a safari went bad. You ran into another white hunter and you asked, "How is everything going?" and he answered, "Oh, I'm still drinking their whisky," and you knew everything had gone to pot.

"I'm sorry," Macomber said and looked at him with his American face that would stay adolescent until it became middle-aged, and Wilson noted his crew-cropped hair, fine eyes only faintly shifty, good nose, thin lips and handsome jaw. "I'm sorry I didn't realize that. There are lots of things I don't know."

So what could he do, Wilson thought. He was all ready to break it off quickly and neatly and here the beggar was apologizing after he had just insulted him. He made one more attempt. "Don't worry about me talking," he said. "I have a living to make. You know in Africa no woman ever misses her lion and no white man ever bolts."

"I bolted like a rabbit," Macomber said.

Now what in hell were you going to do about a man who talked like that, Wilson wondered.

Wilson looked at Macomber with his flat, blue, machine-gunner's eyes and the other smiled back at him. He had a pleasant smile if you did not notice how his eyes showed when he was hurt.

"Maybe I can fix it up on buffalo," he said. "We're after them next, aren't we?"

"In the morning if you like," Wilson told him. Perhaps he had been wrong. This was certainly the way to take it. You most certainly could not tell a damned thing about an American. He was all for Macomber again. If you could forget the morning. But, of course, you couldn't. The morning had been about as bad as they come.

"Here comes the Memsahib,"<sup>5</sup> he said. She was walking over from her tent looking refreshed and cheerful and quite lovely. She had a very perfect oval face, so perfect that you expected her to be stupid. But she wasn't stupid, Wilson thought, no, not stupid.

"How is the beautiful red-faced Mr. Wilson? Are you feeling better, Francis, my pearl?"

"Oh, much," said Macomber.

"I've dropped the whole thing," she said, sitting down at the table. "What importance is there to whether Francis is any good at killing lions? That's not his trade. That's Mr. Wilson's trade. Mr. Wilson is really very impressive killing anything. You do kill anything, don't you?"

"Oh, anything," said Wilson. "Simply anything." They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, the

5. The native term of respect in India for addressing a European woman. British colonials carried it to Africa.

most predatory and the most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened. Or is it that they pick men they can handle? They can't know that much at the age they marry, he thought. He was grateful that he had gone through his education on American women before now because this was a very attractive one.

"We're going after buff<sup>6</sup> in the morning," he told her.

"I'm coming," she said.

"No, you're not."

"Oh, yes, I am. Mayn't I, Francis?"

"Why not stay in camp?"

"Not for anything," she said. "I wouldn't miss something like today for anything."

When she left, Wilson was thinking, when she went off to cry, she seemed a hell of a fine woman. She seemed to understand, to realize, to be hurt for him and for herself and to know how things really stood. She is away for twenty minutes and now she is back, simply enamelled in that American female cruelty. They are the damndest women. Really the damndest.

"We'll put on another show for you tomorrow," Francis Macomber said.

"You're not coming," Wilson said.

"You're very mistaken," she told him. "And I want so to see you perform again. You were lovely this morning. That is if blowing things' heads off is lovely."

"Here's the lunch," said Wilson. "You're very merry, aren't you?"

"Why not? I didn't come out here to be dull."

"Well, it hasn't been dull," Wilson said. He could see the boulders in the river and the high bank beyond with the trees and he remembered the morning.

"Oh, no," she said. "It's been charming. And tomorrow. You don't know how I look forward to tomorrow."

"That's eland he's offering you," Wilson said.

"They're the big cowy things that jump like hares, aren't they?"

"I suppose that describes them," Wilson said.

"It's very good meat," Macomber said.

"Did you shoot it, Francis?" she asked.

"Yes."

"They're not dangerous, are they?"

"Only if they fall on you." Wilson told her.

"I'm so glad."

"Why not let up on the bitchery just a little, Margot," Macomber said, cutting the eland steak and putting some mashed potato, gravy and carrot on the down-turned fork that tined through the



piece of meat.

"I suppose I could," she said, "since you put it so prettily."

"Tonight we'll have champagne for the lion," Wilson said. "It's a bit too hot at noon."

"Oh, the lion," Margot said. "I'd forgotten the lion!"

So, Robert Wilson thought to himself, she is giving him a ride, isn't she? Or do you suppose that's her idea of putting up a good show? How should a woman act when she discovers her husband is a bloody coward? She's damn cruel but they're all cruel. They govern, of course, and to govern one has to be cruel sometimes. Still, I've seen enough of their damn terrorism.

"Have some more cland," he said to her politely.

That afternoon, late, Wilson and Macomber went out in the motor car with the native driver and the two gun-bearers. Mrs. Macomber stayed in the camp. It was too hot to go out, she said, and she was going with them in the early morning. As they drove off Wilson saw her standing under the big tree, looking pretty rather than beautiful in her faintly rosy khaki, her dark hair drawn back off her forehead and gathered in a knot low on her neck, her face as fresh, he thought, as though she were in England. She waved to them as the car went off through the swale of high grass and curved around through the trees into the small hills of orchard bush.

In the orchard bush they found a herd of impala, and leaving the car they stalked one old ram with long, wide-spread horns and Macomber killed it with a very creditable shot that knocked the buck down at a good two hundred yards and sent the herd off bounding wildly and leaping over one another's backs in long, leg-drawn-up leaps as unbelievable and as floating as those one makes sometimes in dreams.

"That was a good shot," Wilson said. "They're a small target."

"Is it a worth-while head?" Macomber asked.

"It's excellent," Wilson told him. "You shoot like that and you'll have no trouble."

"Do you think we'll find buffalo tomorrow?"

"There's a good chance of it. They feed out early in the morning and with luck we may catch them in the open."

"I'd like to clear away that lion business," Macomber said. "It's not very pleasant to have your wife see you do something like that."

I should think it would be even more unpleasant to do it, Wilson thought, wife or no wife, or to talk about it having done it. But he said, "I wouldn't think about that any more. Any one could be upset by his first lion. That's all over."

But that night after dinner and a whisky and soda by the fire before going to bed, as Francis Macomber lay on his cot with the mosquito bar over him and listened to the night noises it was not

all over. It was neither all over nor was it beginning. It was there exactly as it happened with some parts of it indelibly emphasized and he was miserably ashamed at it. But more than shame he felt cold, hollow fear in him. The fear was still there like a cold slimy hollow in all the emptiness where once his confidence had been and it made him feel sick. It was still there with him now.

It had started the night before when he had wakened and heard the lion roaring somewhere up along the river. It was a deep sound and at the end there were sort of coughing grunts that made him seem just outside the tent, and when Francis Macomber woke in the night to hear it he was afraid. He could hear his wife breathing quietly, asleep. There was no one to tell he was afraid, nor to be afraid with him, and, lying alone, he did not know the Somali<sup>7</sup> proverb that says a brave man is always frightened three times by a lion; when he first sees his track, when he first hears him roar and when he first confronts him. Then while they were eating breakfast by lantern light out in the dining tent, before the sun was up, the lion roared again and Francis thought he was just at the edge of camp.

"Sounds like an old-timer," Robert Wilson said, looking up from his kippers and coffee. "Listen to him cough."

"Is he very close?"

"A mile or so up the stream."

"Will we see him?"

"We'll have a look."

"Does his roaring carry that far? It sounds as though he were right in camp."

"Carries a hell of a long way," said Robert Wilson. "It's strange the way it carries. Hope he's a shootable cat. The boys said there was a very big one about here."

"If I get a shot, where should I hit him," Macomber asked, "to stop him?"

"In the shoulders," Wilson said. "In the neck if you can make it. Shoot for bone. Break him down."

"I hope I can place it properly," Macomber said.

"You shoot very well," Wilson told him. "Take your time. Make sure of him. The first one in is the one that counts."

"What range will it be?"

"Can't tell. Lion has something to say about that. Don't shoot unless it's close enough so you can make sure."

"At under a hundred yards?" Macomber asked.

Wilson looked at him quickly.

"Hundred's about right. Might have to take him a bit under. Shouldn't chance a shot at much over that. A hundred's a decent

7. Of Somaliland, the eastern extremity of Africa, south of the Gulf of Aden.

range. You can hit him wherever you want at that. Here comes the Memsahib."

"Good morning," she said. "Are we going after that lion?"

"As soon as you deal with your breakfast," Wilson said. "How are you feeling?"

"Marvellous," she said. "I'm very excited."

"I'll just go and see that everything is ready," Wilson went off. As he left the lion roared again.

"Noisy beggar," Wilson said. "We'll put a stop to that."

"What's the matter, Francis?" his wife asked him.

"Nothing," Macomber said.

"Yes, there is," she said. "What are you upset about?"

"Nothing," he said.

"Tell me," she looked at him. "Don't you feel well?"

"It's that damned roaring," he said. "It's been going on all night, you know."

"Why didn't you wake me," she said. "I'd love to have heard it."

"I've got to kill the damned thing," Macomber said, miserably.

"Well, that's what you're out here for, isn't it?"

"Yes. But I'm nervous. Hearing the thing roar gets on my nerves."

"Well then, as Wilson said, kill him and stop his roaring."

"Yes, darling," said Francis Macomber. "It sounds easy, doesn't it?"

"You're not afraid, are you?"

"Of course not. But I'm nervous from hearing him roar all night."

"You'll kill him marvellously," she said. "I know you will. I'm awfully anxious to see it."

"Finish your breakfast and we'll be starting."

"It's not light yet," she said. "This is a ridiculous hour."

Just then the lion roared in a deep-chested moaning, suddenly guttural, ascending vibration that seemed to shake the air and ended in a sigh and a heavy, deep-chested grunt.

"He sounds almost here," Macomber's wife said.

"My God," said Macomber. "I hate that damned noise."

"It's very impressive."

"Impressive. It's frightful."

Robert Wilson came up then carrying his short, ugly, shockingly big-bored .505 Gibbs and grinning.

"Come on," he said. "Your gun-bearer has your Springfield and the big gun. Everything's in the car. Have you solids?"<sup>8</sup>

"Yes."

"I'm ready," Mrs. Macomber said.

"Must make him stop that racket," Wilson said. "You get in front. The Memsahib can sit back here with me."

8. Solid, jacketed bullets.

They climbed into the motor car and, in the gray first daylight, moved off up the river through the trees. Macomber opened the breech of his rifle and saw he had metal-cased bullets, shut the bolt and put the rifle on safety. He saw his hand was trembling. He felt in his pocket for more cartridges and moved his fingers over the cartridges in the loops of his tunic front. He turned back to where Wilson sat in the rear seat of the doorless, box-bodied motor car beside his wife, them both grinning with excitement, and Wilson leaned forward and whispered,

"See the birds dropping. Means the old boy has left his kill."

On the far bank of the stream Macomber could see, above the trees, vultures circling and plummeting down.

"Chances are he'll come to drink along here," Wilson whispered. "Before he goes to lay up. Keep an eye out."

They were driving slowly along the high bank of the stream which here cut deeply to its boulder-filled bed, and they wound in and out through big trees as they drove. Macomber was watching the opposite bank when he felt Wilson take hold of his arm. The car stopped.

"There he is," he heard the whisper. "Ahead and to the right. Get out and take him. He's a marvellous lion."

Macomber saw the lion now. He was standing almost broadside, his great head up and turned toward them. The early morning breeze that blew toward them was just stirring his dark mane, and the lion looked huge, silhouetted on the rise of bank in the gray morning light, his shoulders heavy, his barrel of a body bulking smoothly.

"How far is he?" asked Macomber, raising his rifle.

"About seventy-five. Get out and take him."

"Why not shoot from where I am?"

"You don't shoot them from cars," he heard Wilson saying in his ear. "Get out. He's not going to stay there all day."

Macomber stepped out of the curved opening at the side of the front seat, onto the step and down onto the ground. The lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this object that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking like some super-rhino. There was no man smell carried toward him and he watched the object, moving his great head a little from side to side. Then watching the object, not afraid, but hesitating before going down the bank to drink with such a thing opposite him, he saw a man figure detach itself from it and he turned his heavy head and swung away toward the cover of the trees as he heard a cracking crash and felt the slam of a .30-06 220-grain solid bullet that bit his flank and ripped in sudden hot scalding nausea through his stomach. He trotted, heavy, big-footed, swinging wounded full-bellied, through the

trees toward the tall grass and cover, and the crash came again to go past him ripping the air apart. Then it crashed again and he felt the blow as it hit his lower ribs and ripped on through, blood sudden hot and frothy in his mouth, and he galloped toward the high grass where he could crouch and not be seen and make them bring the crashing thing close enough so he could make a rush and get the man that held it.

Macomber had not thought how the lion felt as he got out of the car. He only knew his hands were shaking and as he walked away from the car it was almost impossible for him to make his legs move. They were stiff in the thighs, but he could feel the muscles fluttering. He raised the rifle, sighted on the junction of the lion's head and shoulders and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened though he pulled until he thought his finger would break. Then he knew he had the safety on and as he lowered the rifle to move the safety over he moved another frozen pace forward, and the lion seeing his silhouette now clear of the silhouette of the car, turned and started off at a trot, and, as Macomber fired, he heard a whunk that meant that the bullet was home; but the lion kept on going. Macomber shot again and every one saw the bullet throw a spout of dirt beyond the trotting lion. He shot again, remembering to lower his aim, and they all heard the bullet hit, and the lion went into a gallop and was in the tall grass before he had the bolt pushed forward.

Macomber stood there feeling sick at his stomach, his hands that held the Springfield still cocked, shaking, and his wife and Robert Wilson were standing by him. Beside him too were the two gun-bearers chattering in Wakamba.<sup>9</sup>

"I hit him," Macomber said. "I hit him twice."

"You gut-shot him and you hit him somewhere forward," Wilson said without enthusiasm. The gun-bearers looked very grave. They were silent now.

"You may have killed him," Wilson went on. "We'll have to wait a while before we go in to find out."

"What do you mean?"

"Let him get sick before we follow him up."

"Oh," said Macomber.

"He's a hell of a fine lion," Wilson said cheerfully. "He's gotten into a bad place though."

"Why is it bad?"

"Can't see him until you're on him."

"Oh," said Macomber.

"Come on," said Wilson. "The Memsahib can stay here in the

9. The dialect of their tribe. In other incidents, the Swahili dialect is mentioned, that being generally understood by all tribesmen and most whites.

car. We'll go to have a look at the blood spoor."<sup>1</sup>

"Stay here, Margot," Macomber said to his wife. His mouth was very dry and it was hard for him to talk.

"Why?" she asked.

"Wilson says so."

"We're going to have a look," Wilson said. "You stay here. You can see even better from here."

"All right."

Wilson spoke in Swahili to the driver. He nodded and said, "Yes, Bwana."<sup>2</sup>

Then they went down the steep bank and across the stream, climbing over and around the boulders and up the other bank, pulling up by some projecting roots, and along it until they found where the lion had been trotting when Macomber first shot. There was dark blood on the short grass that the gun-bearers pointed out with grass stems, and that ran away behind the river bank trees.

"What do we do?" asked Macomber.

"Not much choice," said Wilson. "We can't bring the car over. Bank's too steep. We'll let him stiffen up a bit and then you and I'll go in and have a look for him."

"Can't we set the grass on fire?" Macomber asked.

"Too green."

"Can't we send beaters?"

Wilson looked at him appraisingly. "Of course we can," he said. "But it's just a touch murderous. You see we know the lion's wounded. You can drive an unwounded lion—he'll move on ahead of a noise—but a wounded lion's going to charge. You can't see him until you're right on him. He'll make himself perfectly flat in cover you wouldn't think would hide a hare. You can't very well send boys in there to that sort of a show. Somebody bound to get mauled."

"What about the gun-bearers?"

"Oh, they'll go with us. It's their *shauri*.<sup>3</sup> You see, they signed on for it. They don't look too happy though, do they?"

"I don't want to go in there," said Macomber. It was out before he knew he'd said it.

"Neither do I," said Wilson very cheerily. "Really no choice though." Then, as an afterthought, he glanced at Macomber and saw suddenly how he was trembling and the pitiful look on his face.

"You don't have to go in, of course," he said. "That's what I'm hired for, you know. That's why I'm so expensive."

"You mean you'd go in by yourself? Why not leave him there?"

Robert Wilson, whose entire occupation had been with the lion

1. The track of a wild animal.

2. In African lingua franca, a respectful term of address to a man.

3. An East African word from the Arabic, originally meaning "negotiation," but in the vernacular, "business" or "predicament."

and the problem he presented, and who had not been thinking about Macomber except to note that he was rather windy, suddenly felt as though he had opened the wrong door in a hotel and seen something shameful.

"What do you mean?"

"Why not just leave him?"

"You mean pretend to ourselves he hasn't been hit?"

"No. Just drop it."

"It isn't done."

"Why not?"

"For one thing, he's certain to be suffering. For another, some one else might run onto him."

"I see."

"But you don't have to have anything to do with it."

"I'd like to," Macomber said. "I'm just scared, you know."

"I'll go ahead when we go in," Wilson said, "with Kongoni tracking. You keep behind me and a little to one side. Chances are we'll hear him growl. If we see him we'll both shoot. Don't worry about anything. I'll keep you backed up. As a matter of fact, you know, perhaps you'd better not go. It might be much better. Why don't you go over and join the Memsahib while I just get it over with?"

"No, I want to go."

"All right," said Wilson. "But don't go in if you don't want to. This is my *shauri* now, you know."

"I want to go," said Macomber.

They sat under a tree and smoked.

"Want to go back and speak to the Memsahib while we're waiting?" Wilson asked.

"No."

"I'll just step back and tell her to be patient."

"Good," said Macomber. He sat there, sweating under his arms, his mouth dry, his stomach hollow feeling, wanting to find courage to tell Wilson to go on and finish off the lion without him. He could not know that Wilson was furious because he had not noticed the state he was in earlier and sent him back to his wife. While he sat there Wilson came up. "I have your big gun," he said. "Take it. We've given him time, I think. Come on."

Macomber took the big gun and Wilson said:

"Keep behind me and about five yards to the right and do exactly as I tell you." Then he spoke in Swahili to the two gun-bearers who looked the picture of gloom.

"Let's go," he said.

"Could I have a drink of water?" Macomber asked. Wilson spoke to the older gun-bearer, who wore a canteen on his belt, and the man unbuckled it, unscrewed the top and handed it to Macomber,

who took it noticing how heavy it seemed and how hairy and shoddy the felt covering was in his hand. He raised it to drink and looked ahead at the high grass with the flat-topped trees behind it. A breeze was blowing toward them and the grass rippled gently in the wind. He looked at the gun-bearer and he could see the gun-bearer was suffering too with fear.

Thirty-five yards into the grass the big lion lay flattened out along the ground. His ears were back and his only movement was a slight twitching up and down of his long, black-tufted tail. He had turned at bay as soon as he had reached this cover and he was sick with the wound through his full belly, and weakening with the wound through his lungs that brought a thin foamy red to his mouth each time he breathed. His flanks were wet and hot and flies were on the little openings the solid bullets had made in his tawny hide, and his big yellow eyes, narrowed with hate, looked straight ahead, only blinking when the pain came as he breathed, and his claws dug in the soft baked earth. All of him, pain, sickness, hatred and all of his remaining strength, was tightening into an absolute concentration for a rush. He could hear the men talking and he waited, gathering all of himself into this preparation for a charge as soon as the men would come into the grass. As he heard their voices his tail stiffened to twitch up and down, and, as they came into the edge of the grass, he made a coughing grunt and charged.

Kongoni, the old gun-bearer, in the lead watching the blood spoor, Wilson watching the grass for any movement, his big gun ready, the second gun-bearer looking ahead and listening, Macomber close to Wilson, his rifle cocked, they had just moved into the grass when Macomber heard the blood-choked coughing grunt, and saw the swishing rush in the grass. The next thing he knew he was running; running wildly, in panic in the open, running toward the stream.

He heard the *ca-ra-wong!* of Wilson's big rifle, and again in a second crashing *carawong!* and turning saw the lion, horrible-looking now, with half his head seeming to be gone, crawling toward Wilson in the edge of the tall grass while the red-faced man worked the bolt on the short ugly rifle and aimed carefully as another blasting *carawong!* came from the muzzle, and the crawling, heavy, yellow bulk of the lion stiffened and the huge, mutilated head slid forward and Macomber, standing by himself in the clearing where he had run, holding a loaded rifle, while two black men and a white man looked back at him in contempt, knew the lion was dead. He came toward Wilson, his tallness all seeming a naked reproach, and Wilson looked at him and said:

"Want to take pictures?"

"No," he said.



That was all any one had said until they reached the motor car. Then Wilson had said:

"Hell of a fine lion. Boys will skin him out. We might as well stay here in the shade."

Macomber's wife had not looked at him nor he at her and he had sat by her in the back seat with Wilson sitting in the front seat. Once he had reached over and taken his wife's hand without looking at her and she had removed her hand from his. Looking across the stream to where the gun-bearers were skinning out the lion he could see that she had been able to see the whole thing. While they sat there his wife had reached forward and put her hand on Wilson's shoulder. He turned and she had leaned forward over the low seat and kissed him on the mouth.

"Oh, I say," said Wilson, going redder than his natural baked color.

"Mr. Robert Wilson," she said. "The beautiful red-faced Mr. Robert Wilson."

Then she sat down beside Macomber again and looked away across the stream to where the lion lay, with uplifted, white-muscled, tendon-marked naked forearms, and white bloating belly, as the black men fleshed away the skin. Finally the gun-bearers brought the skin over, wet and heavy, and climbed in behind with it, rolling it up before they got in, and the motor car started. No one had said anything more until they were back in camp.

That was the story of the lion. Macomber did not know how the lion had felt before he started his rush, nor during it when the unbelievable smash of the .505 with a muzzle velocity of two tons had hit him in the mouth, nor what kept him coming after that, when the second ripping crash had smashed his hind quarters and he had come crawling on toward the crashing, blasting thing that had destroyed him. Wilson knew something about it and only expressed it by saying, "Damned fine lion," but Macomber did not know how Wilson felt about things either. He did not know how his wife felt except that she was through with him.

His wife had been through with him before but it never lasted. He was very wealthy, and would be much wealthier, and he knew she would not leave him ever now. That was one of the few things that he really knew. He knew about that, about motor cycles—that was earliest—about motor cars, about duck-shooting, about fishing, trout, salmon and big-sea, about sex in books, many books, too many books, about all court games, about dogs, not much about horses, about hanging on to his money, about most of the other things his world dealt in, and about his wife not leaving him. His wife had been a great beauty and she was still a great beauty in Africa, but she was not a great enough beauty any more at home to

be able to leave him and better herself and she knew it and he knew it. She had missed the chance to leave him and he knew it. If he had been better with women she would probably have started to worry about him getting another new, beautiful wife; but she knew too much about him to worry about him either. Also, he had always had a great tolerance which seemed the nicest thing about him if it were not the most sinister.

All in all they were known as a comparatively happily married couple, one of those whose disruption is often rumored but never occurs, and as the society columnist put it, they were adding more than a spice of *adventure* to their much envied and ever-enduring *Romance* by a *Safari* in what was known as *Darkest Africa* until the Martin Johnsons<sup>4</sup> lighted it on so many silver screens where they were pursuing *Old Simba* the lion, the buffalo, *Tembo* the elephant and as well collecting specimens for the Museum of Natural History. This same columnist had reported them *on the verge* at least three times in the past and they had been. But they always made it up. They had a sound basis of union. Margot was too beautiful for Macomber to divorce her and Macomber had too much money for Margot ever to leave him.

It was now about three o'clock in the morning and Francis Macomber, who had been asleep a little while after he had stopped thinking about the lion, awakened and then slept again, woke suddenly, frightened in a dream of the bloody-headed lion standing over him, and listening while his heart pounded, he realized that his wife was not in the other cot in the tent. He lay awake with that knowledge for two hours.

At the end of that time his wife came into the tent, lifted her mosquito bar and crawled cozily into bed.

"Where have you been?" Macomber asked in the darkness.

"Hello," she said. "Are you awake?"

"Where have you been?"

"I just went out to get a breath of air."

"You did, like hell."

"What do you want me to say, darling?"

"Where have you been?"

"Out to get a breath of air."

"That's a new name for it. You *are* a bitch."

"Well, you're a coward."

"All right," he said. "What of it?"

"Nothing as far as I'm concerned. But please let's not talk, darling, because I'm very sleepy."

"You think that I'll take anything."

4. Martin E. Johnson (1884-1937), explorer and adventurer, attained popular fame by his books and motion pictures

of African wild life in the twenties; his wife appeared with him in the films.

"I know you will, sweet."

"Well, I won't."

"Please, darling, let's not talk. I'm so very sleepy."

"There wasn't going to be any of that. You promised there wouldn't be."

"Well, there is now," she said sweetly.

"You said if we made this trip that there would be none of that. You promised."

"Yes, darling. That's the way I meant it to be. But the trip was spoiled yesterday. We don't have to talk about it, do we?"

"You don't wait long when you have an advantage, do you?"

"Please let's not talk. I'm so sleepy, darling."

"I'm going to talk."

"Don't mind me then, because I'm going to sleep." And she did.

At breakfast they were all three at the table before daylight and Francis Macomber found that, of all the many men that he had hated, he hated Robert Wilson the most.

"Sleep well?" Wilson asked in his throaty voice, filling a pipe.

"Did you?"

"Topping," the white hunter told him.

You bastard, thought Macomber, you insolent bastard.

So she woke him when she came in, Wilson thought, looking at them both with his flat, cold eyes. Well, why doesn't he keep his wife where she belongs? What does he think I am, a bloody plaster saint? Let him keep her where she belongs. It's his own fault.

"Do you think we'll find buffalo?" Margot asked, pushing away a dish of apricots.

"Chance of it," Wilson said and smiled at her. "Why don't you stay in camp?"

"Not for anything," she told him.

"Why not order her to stay in camp?" Wilson said to Macomber.

"You order her," said Macomber coldly.

"Let's not have any ordering, nor," turning to Macomber, "any silliness, Francis," Margot said quite pleasantly.

"Are you ready to start?" Macomber asked.

"Any time," Wilson told him. "Do you want the Memsahib to go?"

"Does it make any difference whether I do or not?"

The hell with it, thought Robert Wilson. The utter complete hell with it. So this is what it's going to be like. Well, this is what it's going to be like, then.

"Makes no difference," he said.

"You're sure you wouldn't like to stay in camp with her yourself and let me go out and hunt the buffalo?" Macomber asked.

"Can't do that," said Wilson. "Wouldn't talk rot if I were you."

"I'm not talking rot. I'm disgusted."

"Bad word, disgusted."

"Francis, will you please try to speak sensibly?" his wife said.

"I speak too damned sensibly," Macomber said. "Did you ever eat such filthy food?"

"Something wrong with the food?" asked Wilson quietly.

"No more than with everything else."

"I'd pull yourself together, laddybuck," Wilson said very quietly.

"There's a boy waits at table that understands a little English."

"The hell with him."

Wilson stood up and puffing on his pipe strolled away, speaking a few words in Swahili to one of the gun-bearers who was standing waiting for him. Macomber and his wife sat on at the table. He was staring at his coffee cup.

"If you make a scene I'll leave you, darling," Margot said quietly.

"No, you won't."

"You can try it and see."

"You won't leave me."

"No," she said. "I won't leave you and you'll behave yourself."

"Behave myself? That's a way to talk. Behave myself."

"Yes. Behave yourself."

"Why don't *you* try behaving?"

"I've tried it so long. So very long."

"I hate that red-faced swine," Macomber said. "I loathe the sight of him."

"He's really *very* nice."

"Oh, *shut up*," Macomber almost shouted. Just then the car came up and stopped in front of the dining tent and the driver and the two gun-bearers got out. Wilson walked over and looked at the husband and wife sitting there at the table.

"Going shooting?" he asked.

"Yes," said Macomber, standing up. "Yes."

"Better bring a woolly. It will be cool in the car," Wilson said.

"I'll get my leather jacket," Margot said.

"The boy has it," Wilson told her. He climbed into the front with the driver and Francis Macomber and his wife sat, not speaking, in the back seat.

Hope the silly beggar doesn't take a notion to blow the back of my head off, Wilson thought to himself. Women *are* a nuisance on safari.

The car was grinding down to cross the river at a pebbly ford in the gray daylight and then climbed, angling up the steep bank, where Wilson had ordered a way shovelled out the day before so they could reach the parklike wooded rolling country on the far

side.

It was a good morning, Wilson thought. There was a heavy dew and as the wheels went through the grass and low bushes he could smell the odor of the crushed fronds. It was an odor like verbena and he liked this early morning smell of the dew, the crushed bracken and the look of the tree trunks showing black through the early morning mist, as the car made its way through the untracked, park-like country. He had put the two in the back seat out of his mind now and was thinking about buffalo. The buffalo that he was after stayed in the daytime in a thick swamp where it was impossible to get a shot, but in the night they fed out into an open stretch of country and if he could come between them and their swamp with the car, Macomber would have a good chance at them in the open. He did not want to hunt buff with Macomber in thick cover. He did not want to hunt buff or anything else with Macomber at all, but he was a professional hunter and he had hunted with some rare ones in his time. If they got buff today there would only be rhino to come and the poor man would have gone through his dangerous game and things might pick up. He'd have nothing more to do with the woman and Macomber would get over that too. He must have gone through plenty of that before by the look of things. Poor beggar. He must have a way of getting over it. Well, it was the poor sod's own bloody fault.

He, Robert Wilson, carried a double size cot on safari to accommodate any windfalls he might receive. He had hunted for a certain clientele, the international, fast, sporting set, where the women did not feel they were getting their money's worth unless they had shared that cot with the white hunter. He despised them when he was away from them although he liked some of them well enough at the time, but he made his living by them; and their standards were his standards as long as they were hiring him.

They were his standards in all except the shooting. He had his own standards about the killing and they could live up to them or get some one else to hunt them. He knew, too, that they all respected him for this. This Macomber was an odd one though. Damned if he wasn't. Now the wife. Well, the wife. Yes, the wife. Hm, the wife. Well he'd dropped all that. He looked around at them. Macomber sat grim and furious. Margot smiled at him. She looked younger today, more innocent and fresher and not so professionally beautiful. What's in her heart God knows, Wilson thought. She hadn't talked much last night. At that it was a pleasure to see her.

The motor car climbed up a slight rise and went on through the trees and then out into a grassy prairie-like opening and kept in the shelter of the trees along the edge, the driver going slowly and

Wilson looking carefully out across the prairie and all along its far side. He stopped the car and studied the opening with his field glasses. Then he motioned to the driver to go on and the car moved slowly along, the driver avoiding wart-hog holes and driving around the mud castles ants had built. Then, looking across the opening, Wilson suddenly turned and said,

"By God, there they are!"

And looking where he pointed, while the car jumped forward and Wilson spoke in rapid Swahili to the driver, Macomber saw three huge, black animals looking almost cylindrical in their long heaviness, like big black tank cars, moving at a gallop across the far edge of the open prairie. They moved at a stiff-necked, stiff bodied gallop and he could see the upswept wide black horns on their heads as they galloped heads out; the heads not moving.

"They're three old bulls," Wilson said. "We'll cut them off before they get to the swamp."

The car was going a wild forty-five miles an hour across the open and as Macomber watched, the buffalo got bigger and bigger until he could see the gray, hairless, scabby look of one huge bull and how his neck was a part of his shoulders and the shiny black of his horns as he galloped a little behind the others that were strung out in that steady plunging gait; and then, the car swaying as though it had just jumped a road, they drew up close and he could see the plunging hugeness of the bull, and the dust in his sparsely haired hide, the wide boss of horn and his outstretched, wide-nostrilled muzzle, and he was raising his rifle when Wilson shouted, "Not from the car, you fool!" and he had no fear, only hatred of Wilson, while the brakes clamped on and the car skidded, plowing sideways to an almost stop and Wilson was out on one side and he on the other, stumbling as his feet hit the still speeding-by of the earth, and then he was shooting at the bull as he moved away, hearing the bullets whunk into him, emptying his rifle at him as he moved steadily away, finally remembering to get his shots forward into the shoulder, and as he fumbled to re-load, he saw the bull was down. Down on his knees, his big head tossing, and seeing the other two still galloping he shot at the leader and hit him. He shot again and missed and he heard the *carawonging* roar as Wilson shot and saw the leading bull slide forward onto his nose.

"Get that other," Wilson said. "Now you're shooting!"

But the other bull was moving steadily at the same gallop and he missed, throwing a spout of dirt, and Wilson missed and the dust rose in a cloud and Wilson shouted, "Come on. He's too far!" and grabbed his arm and they were in the car again, Macomber and Wilson hanging on the sides and rocketing swayingly over the uneven ground, drawing up on the steady, plunging, heavy-necked,

straight-moving gallop of the bull.

They were behind him and Macomber was filling his rifle, dropping shells onto the ground, jamming it, clearing the jam, then they were almost up with the bull when Wilson yelled "Stop," and the car skidded so that it almost swung over and Macomber fell forward onto his feet, slammed his bolt forward and fired as far forward as he could aim into the galloping, rounded black back, aimed and shot again, then again, then again, and the bullets, all of them hitting, had no effect on the buffalo that he could see. Then Wilson shot, the roar deafening him, and he could see the bull stagger. Macomber shot again, aiming carefully, and down he came, onto his knees.

"All right," Wilson said. "Nice work. That's the three."

Macomber felt a drunken elation.

"How many times did you shoot?" he asked.

"Just three," Wilson said. "You killed the first bull. The biggest one. I helped you finish the other two. Afraid they might have got into cover. You had them killed. I was just mopping up a little. You shot damn well."

"Let's go to the car," said Macomber. "I want a drink."

"Got to finish off that buff first," Wilson told him. The buffalo was on his knees and he jerked his head furiously and bellowed in pig-eyed, roaring rage as they came toward him.

"Watch he doesn't get up," Wilson said. Then, "Get a little broadside and take him in the neck just behind the ear."

Macomber aimed carefully at the center of the huge, jerking, rage-driven neck and shot. At the shot the head dropped forward.

"That does it," said Wilson. "Got the spine. They're a hell of a looking thing, aren't they?"

"Let's get the drink," said Macomber. In his life he had never felt so good.

In the car Macomber's wife sat very white faced. "You were marvellous, darling," she said to Macomber. "What a ride."

"Was it rough?" Wilson asked.

"It was frightful. I've never been more frightened in my life."

"Let's all have a drink," Macomber said.

"By all means," said Wilson. "Give it to the Memsahib." She drank the neat whisky from the flask and shuddered a little when she swallowed. She handed the flask to Macomber who handed it to Wilson.

"It was frightfully exciting," she said. "It's given me a dreadful headache. I didn't know you were allowed to shoot them from cars though."

"No one shot from cars," said Wilson coldly.

"I mean chase them from cars."

"Wouldn't ordinarily," Wilson said. "Seemed sporting enough to me though while we were doing it. Taking more chance driving that way across the plain full of holes and one thing and another than hunting on foot. Buffalo could have charged us each time we shot if he liked. Gave him every chance. Wouldn't mention it to any one though. It's illegal if that's what you mean."

"It seemed very unfair to me," Margot said, "chasing those big helpless things in a motor car."

"Did it?" said Wilson.

"What would happen if they heard about it in Nairobi?"<sup>5</sup>

"I'd lose my licence for one thing. Other unpleasantnesses," Wilson said, taking a drink from the flask. "I'd be out of business."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"Well," said Macomber, and he smiled for the first time all day. "Now she has something on you."

"You have such a pretty way of putting things, Francis," Margot Macomber said. Wilson looked at them both. If a four-letter man marries a five-letter woman, he was thinking, what number of letters would their children be? What he said was, "We lost a gun-bearer. Did you notice it?"

"My God, no," Macomber said.

"Here he comes," Wilson said. "He's all right. He must have fallen off when we left the first bull."

Approaching them was the middle-aged gun-bearer, limping along in his knitted cap, khaki tunic, shorts and rubber sandals, gloomy-faced and disgusted looking. As he came up he called out to Wilson in Swahili and they all saw the change in the white hunter's face.

"What does he say?" asked Margot.

"He says the first bull got up and went into the bush," Wilson said with no expression in his voice.

"Oh," said Macomber blankly.

"Then it's going to be just like the lion," said Margot, full of anticipation.

"It's not going to be a damned bit like the lion," Wilson told her. "Did you want another drink, Macomber?"

"Thanks, yes," Macomber said. He expected the feeling he had had about the lion to come back but it did not. For the first time in his life he really felt wholly without fear. Instead of fear he had a feeling of definite elation.

"We'll go and have a look at the second bull," Wilson said. "I'll tell the driver to put the car in the shade."

"What are you going to do?" asked Margaret Macomber.

5. Capital of Kenya, British East African colony and protectorate, which is the scene of this story.



"Take a look at the buff," Wilson said.

"I'll come."

"Come along."

The three of them walked over to where the second buffalo bulked blackly in the open, head forward on the grass, the massive horns swung wide.

"He's a very good head," Wilson said. "That's close to a fifty-inch spread."

Macomber was looking at him with delight.

"He's hateful looking," said Margot. "Can't we go into the shade?"

"Of course," Wilson said. "Look," he said to Macomber, and pointed. "See that patch of bush?"

"Yes."

"That's where the first bull went in. The gun-bearer said when he fell off the bull was down. He was watching us helling along and the other two buff galloping. When he looked up there was the bull up and looking at him. Gun-bearer ran like hell and the bull went off slowly into that bush."

"Can we go in after him now?" asked Macomber eagerly.

Wilson looked at him appraisingly. Damned if this isn't a strange one, he thought. Yesterday he's scared sick and today he's a ruddy fire eater.

"No, we'll give him a while."

"Let's please go into the shade," Margot said. Her face was white and she looked ill.

They made their way to the car where it stood under a single, wide-spreading tree and all climbed in.

"Chances are he's dead in there," Wilson remarked. "After a little we'll have a look."

Macomber felt a wild unreasonable happiness that he had never known before.

"By God, that was a chase," he said. "I've never felt any such feeling. Wasn't it marvellous, Margot?"

"I hated it."

"Why?"

"I hated it," she said bitterly. "I loathed it."

"You know I don't think I'd ever be afraid of anything again," Macomber said to Wilson. "Something happened in me after we first saw the buff and started after him. Like a dam bursting. It was pure excitement."

"Cleans out your liver," said Wilson. "Damn funny things happen to people."

Macomber's face was shining. "You know something did happen to me," he said. "I feel absolutely different."

His wife said nothing and eyed him strangely. She was sitting far back in the seat and Macomber was sitting forward talking to Wilson who turned sideways talking over the back of the front seat.

"You know, I'd like to try another lion," Macomber said. "I'm really not afraid of them now. After all, what can they do to you?"

"That's it," said Wilson. "Worst one can do is kill you. How does it go? Shakespeare. Damned good. See if I can remember. Oh, damned good. Used to quote it to myself at one time. Let's see. 'By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death and let it go which way it will he that dies this year is quit for the next.'<sup>6</sup> Damned fine, eh?"

He was very embarrassed, having brought out this thing he had lived by, but he had seen men come of age before and it always moved him. It was not a matter of their twenty-first birthday.

It had taken a strange chance of hunting, a sudden precipitation into action without opportunity for worrying beforehand, to bring this about with Macomber, but regardless of how it had happened it had most certainly happened. Look at the beggar now, Wilson thought. It's that some of them stay little boys so long, Wilson thought. Sometimes all their lives. Their figures stay boyish when they're fifty. The great American boy-men. Damned strange people. But he liked this Macomber now. Damned strange fellow. Probably meant the end of cuckoldry too. Well, that would be a damned good thing. Damned good thing. Beggar had probably been afraid all his life. Don't know what started it. But over now. Hadn't had time to be afraid with the buff. That and being angry too. Motor car too. Motor cars made it familiar. Be a damn fire eater now. He'd seen it in the war work the same way. More of a change than any loss of virginity. Fear gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man. Women knew it too. No bloody fear.

From the far corner of the seat Margaret Macomber looked at the two of them. There was no change in Wilson. She saw Wilson as she had seen him the day before when she had first realized what his great talent was. But she saw the change in Francis Macomber now.

"Do you have that feeling of happiness about what's going to happen?" Macomber asked, still exploring his new wealth.

"You're not supposed to mention it," Wilson said, looking in the other's face. "Much more fashionable to say you're scared. Mind you, you'll be scared too, plenty of times."

"But you *have* a feeling of happiness about action to come?"

"Yes," said Wilson. "There's that. Doesn't do to talk too much about all this. Talk the whole thing away. No pleasure in anything if you mouth it up too much."

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"You're both talking rot," said Margot. "Just because you've chased some helpless animals in a motor car you talk like heroes."

"Sorry," said Wilson. "I have been gassing too much." She's worried about it already, he thought.

"If you don't know what we're talking about why not keep out of it?" Macomber asked his wife.

"You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly," his wife said contemptuously, but her contempt was not secure. She was very afraid of something.

Macomber laughed, a very natural hearty laugh. "You know I have," he said. "I really have."

"Isn't it sort of late?" Margot said bitterly. Because she had done the best she could for many years back and the way they were together now was no one person's fault.

"Not for me," said Macomber.

Margot said nothing but sat back in the corner of the seat.

"Do you think we've given him time enough?" Macomber asked Wilson cheerfully.

"We might have a look," Wilson said. "Have you any solids left?"

"The gun-bearer has some."

Wilson called in Swahili and the older gun-bearer, who was skinning out one of the heads, straightened up, pulled a box of solids out of his pocket and brought them over to Macomber, who filled his magazine and put the remaining shells in his pocket.

"You might as well shoot the Springfield," Wilson said. "You're used to it. We'll leave the Mannlicher in the car with the Memsahib. Your gun-bearer can carry your heavy gun. I've this damned cannon. Now let me tell you about them." He had saved this until the last because he did not want to worry Macomber. "When a buff comes he comes with his head high and thrust straight out. The boss of the horns covers any sort of a brain shot. The only shot is straight into the nose. The only other shot is into his chest or, if you're to one side, into the neck or the shoulders. After they've been hit once they take a hell of a lot of killing. Don't try anything fancy. Take the easiest shot there is. They've finished skinning out that head now. Should we get started?"

He called to the gun-bearers, who came up wiping their hands, and the older one got into the back.

"I'll only take Kongoni," Wilson said. "The other can watch to keep the birds away."

As the car moved slowly across the open space toward the island of brushy trees that ran in a tongue of foliage along a dry water course that cut the open swale, Macomber felt his heart pounding and his mouth was dry again, but it was excitement, not fear.

"Here's where he went in," Wilson said. Then to the gun-bearer

in Swahili, "Take the blood spoor."

The car was parallel to the patch of bush. Macomber, Wilson and the gun-bearer got down. Macomber, looking back, saw his wife, with the rifle by her side, looking at him. He waved to her and she did not wave back.

The brush was very thick ahead and the ground was dry. The middle-aged gun-bearer was sweating heavily and Wilson had his hat down over his eyes and his red neck showed just ahead of Macomber. Suddenly the gun-bearer said something in Swahili to Wilson and ran forward.

"He's dead in there," Wilson said. "Good work," and he turned to grip Macomber's hand and as they shook hands, grinning at each other, the gun-bearer shouted wildly and they saw him coming out of the bush sideways, fast as a crab, and the bull coming, nose out, mouth tight closed, blood dripping, massive head straight out, coming in a charge, his little pig eyes bloodshot as he looked at them. Wilson, who was ahead was kneeling shooting, and Macomber, as he fired, unhearing his shot in the roaring of Wilson's gun, saw fragments like slate burst from the huge boss of the horns, and the head jerked, he shot again at the wide nostrils and saw the horns jolt again and fragments fly, and he did not see Wilson now and, aiming carefully, shot again with the buffalo's huge bulk almost on him and his rifle almost level with the on-coming head, nose out, and he could see the little wicked eyes and the head started to lower and he felt a sudden white-hot, blinding flash explode inside his head and that was all he ever felt.

Wilson had ducked to one side to get in a shoulder shot. Macomber had stood solid and shot for the nose, shooting a touch high each time and hitting the heavy horns, splintering and chipping them like hitting a slate roof, and Mrs. Macomber, in the car, had shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Mannlicher as it seemed about to gore Macomber and had hit her husband about two inches up and a little to one side of the base of his skull.

Francis Macomber lay now, face down, not two yards from where the buffalo lay on his side and his wife knelt over him with Wilson beside her.

"I wouldn't turn him over," Wilson said.

The woman was crying hysterically.

"I'd get back in the car," Wilson said. "Where's the rifle?"

She shook her head, her face contorted. The gun-bearer picked up the rifle.

"Leave it as it is," said Wilson. Then, "Go get Abdulla so that he may witness the manner of the accident."

He knelt down, took a handkerchief from his pocket, and spread it over Francis Macomber's crew-cropped head where it lay. The

blood sank into the dry, loose earth.

Wilson stood up and saw the buffalo on his side, his legs out, his thinly-haired belly crawling with ticks. "Hell of a good bull," his brain registered automatically. "A good fifty inches, or better. Better." He called to the driver and told him to spread a blanket over the body and stay by it. Then he walked over to the motor car where the woman sat crying in the corner.

"That was a pretty thing to do," he said in a toneless voice. "He *would* have left you too."

"Stop it," she said.

"Of course it's an accident," he said. "I know that."

"Stop it," she said.

"Don't worry," he said. "There will be a certain amount of unpleasantness but I will have some photographs taken that will be very useful at the inquest. There's the testimony of the gun-bearers and the driver too. You're perfectly all right."

"Stop it," she said.

"There's a hell of a lot to be done," he said. "And I'll have to send a truck off to the lake to wireless for a plane to take the three of us into Nairobi. Why didn't you poison him? That's what they do in England."

"Stop it. Stop it. Stop it," the woman cried.

Wilson looked at her with his flat blue eyes.

"I'm through now," he said. "I was a little angry. I'd begun to like your husband."

"Oh, please stop it," she said. "Please, please stop it."

"That's better," Wilson said. "Please is much better. Now I'll stop."

1935

1936, 1938

## A Way You'll Never Be<sup>6</sup>

The attack had gone across the field, been held up by machine-gun fire from the sunken road and from the group of farm houses,

6. "A Way You'll Never Be," first published in *Winner Take Nothing* (1933), belongs to the cycle of Nick Adams stories, which, considered as a whole, approach the proportions of an episodic novel. Most of them appeared as *In Our Time* (Paris, 1924; New York, 1925). Published close to a decade later, "A Way You'll Never Be" substantiates a crucial sketch in the earlier volume, entitled "Chapter VI," which tells us that Nick is in the war, has been wounded in the spine, and has "made a separate peace." "A Way You'll Never Be" for the first time makes clear the exact nature of that "peace," and explains the

reasons for Nick's strange fears and frustrations in stories of his later experiences, particularly the enigmatic "Big Two-Hearted River." In "A Way You'll Never Be" we have a typical and persistent Hemingway situation, for Nick has been wounded both physically and psychically. The war wound only culminates the successive assaults of violence in his outward environment and inward life. In *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), when Colonel Cantwell revisits the Italian scenes of his experiences in the war, the description of one of them recalls the place where Nick Adams received his injury.

encountered no resistance in the town, and reached the bank of the river. Coming along the road on a bicycle, getting off to push the machine when the surface of the road became too broken, Nicholas Adams saw what had happened by the position of the dead.

They lay alone or in clumps in the high grass of the field and along the road, their pockets out, and over them were flies and around each body or group of bodies were the scattered papers.

In the grass and the grain, beside the road, and in some places scattered over the road, there was much material: a field kitchen, it must have come over when things were going well; many of the calf-skin-covered haversacks, stick bombs, helmets, rifles, sometimes one butt-up, the bayonet stuck in the dirt, they had dug quite a little at the last; stick bombs, helmets, rifles, intrenching tools, ammunition boxes, star-shell pistols, their shells scattered about, medical kits, gas masks, empty gas-mask cans, a squat, tripodded machine gun in a nest of empty shells, full belts protruding from the boxes, the water-cooling can empty and on its side, the breech block gone, the crew in odd positions, and around them, in the grass, more of the typical papers.

There were mass prayer books, group postcards showing the machine-gun unit standing in ranked and ruddy cheerfulness as in a football picture for a college annual; now they were humped and swollen in the grass; propaganda postcards showing a soldier in Austrian uniform bending a woman backward over a bed; the figures were impressionistically drawn; very attractively depicted and had nothing in common with actual rape in which the woman's skirts are pulled over her head to smother her, one comrade sometimes sitting upon the head. There were many of these inciting cards which had evidently been issued just before the offensive. Now they were scattered with the smutty postcards, photographic; the small photographs of village girls by village photographers, the occasional pictures of children, and the letters, letters, letters. There was always much paper about the dead and the *débris* of this attack was no exception.

These were new dead and no one had bothered with anything but their pockets. Our own dead,<sup>7</sup> or what he thought of, still, as our own dead, were surprisingly few, Nick noticed. Their coats had been opened too and their pockets were out, and they showed, by their positions, the manner and the skill of the attack. The hot weather had swollen them all alike regardless of nationality.

The town had evidently been defended, at the last, from the line of the sunken road and there had been few or no Austrians to fall back into it. There were only three bodies in the street and they

7. The Italian troops, with which Nick is serving as an American volunteer.

looked to have been killed running. The houses of the town were broken by the shelling and the street had much rubble of plaster and mortar and there were broken beams, broken tiles, and many holes, some of them yellow-edged from the mustard gas. There were many pieces of shell, and shrapnel balls were scattered in the rubble. There was no one in the town at all.

Nick Adams had seen no one since he had left Fornaci, although, riding along the road through the over-foliaged country, he had seen guns hidden under screens of mulberry leaves to the left of the road, noticing them by the heat-waves in the air above the leaves where the sun hit the metal. Now he went on through the town, surprised to find it deserted, and came out on the low road beneath the bank of the river. Leaving the town there was a bare open space where the road slanted down and he could see the placid reach of the river and the low curve of the opposite bank and the whitened, sun-baked mud where the Austrians had dug. It was all very lush and over-green since he had seen it last and becoming historical had made no change in this, the lower river.

The battalion was along the bank to the left. There was a series of holes in the top of the bank with a few men in them. Nick noticed where the machine guns were posted and the signal rockets in their racks. The men in the holes in the side of the bank were sleeping. No one challenged. He went on and as he came around a turn in the mud bank a young second lieutenant with a stubble of beard and red-rimmed, very bloodshot eyes pointed a pistol at him.

"Who are you?"

Nick told him.

"How do I know this?"

Nick showed him the tessera<sup>8</sup> with photograph and identification and the seal of the third army. He took hold of it.

"I will keep this."

"You will not," Nick said. "Give me back the card and put your gun away. There. In the holster."

"How am I to know who you are?"

"The tessera tells you."

"And if the tessera is false? Give me that card."

"Don't be a fool," Nick said cheerfully. "Take me to your company commander."

"I should send you to battalion headquarters."

"All right," said Nick. "Listen, do you know the Captain Paravicini? The tall one with the small mustache who was an architect and speaks English?"

"You know him?"

8. Literally, "ticket"; here, a military pass.

"A little."

"What company does he command?"

"The second."

"He is commanding the battalion."

"Good," said Nick. He was relieved to know that Para was all right. "Let us go to the battalion."

As Nick had left the edge of the town three shrapnel had burst high and to the right over one of the wrecked houses and since then there had been no shelling. But the face of this officer looked like the face of a man during a bombardment. There was the same tightness and the voice did not sound natural. His pistol made Nick nervous.

"Put it away," he said. "There's the whole river between them and you."

"If I thought you were a spy I would shoot you now," the second lieutenant said.

"Come on," said Nick. "Let us go to the battalion." This officer made him very nervous.

The Captain Paravicini, acting major, thinner and more English-looking than ever, rose when Nick saluted from behind the table in the dugout that was battalion headquarters.

"Hello," he said. "I didn't know you. What are you doing in that uniform?"

"They've put me in it."

"I am very glad to see you, Nicolo."

"Right. You look well. How was the show?"

"We made a very fine attack. Truly. A very fine attack. I will show you. Look."

He showed on the map how the attack had gone.

"I came from I'ornaci," Nick said. "I could see how it had been. It was very good."

"It was extraordinary. Altogether extraordinary. Are you attached to the regiment?"

"No. I am supposed to move around and let them see the uniform."

"How odd."

"If they see one American uniform that is supposed to make them believe others are coming."

"But how will they know it is an American uniform?"

"You will tell them."

"Oh. Yes, I see. I will send a corporal with you to show you about and you will make a tour of the lines."

"Like a bloody politician," Nick said.

"You would be much more distinguished in civilian clothes. They are what is really distinguished."



"With a homburg hat," said Nick.

"Or with a very furry fedora."

"I'm supposed to have my pockets full of cigarettes and postal cards and such things," Nick said. "I should have a musette full of chocolate. These I should distribute with a kind word and a pat on the back. But there weren't any cigarettes and postcards and no chocolate. So they said to circulate around anyway."

"I'm sure your appearance will be very heartening to the troops."

"I wish you wouldn't," Nick said. "I feel badly enough about it as it is. In principle, I would have brought you a bottle of brandy."

"In principle," Para said and smiled, for the first time, showing yellowed teeth. "Such a beautiful expression. Would you like some Grappa?"<sup>9</sup>

"No, thank you," Nick said.

"It hasn't any ether in it."

"I can taste that still," Nick remembered suddenly and completely.

"You know I never knew you were drunk until you started talking coming back in the camions."<sup>1</sup>

"I was stinking in every attack," Nick said.

"I can't do it," Para said. "I took it in the first show, the very first show, and it only made me very upset and then frightfully thirsty."

"You don't need it."

"You're much braver in an attack than I am."

"No," Nick said. "I know how I am and I prefer to get stinking. I'm not ashamed of it."

"I've never seen you drunk."

"No?" said Nick. "Never? Not when we rode from Mestre to Portogrande that night and I wanted to go to sleep and used the bicycle for a blanket and pulled it up under my chin?"

"That wasn't in the lines."

"Let's not talk about how I am," Nick said. "It's a subject I know too much about to want to think about it any more."

"You might as well stay here a while," Paravicini said. "You can take a nap if you like. They didn't do much to this in the bombardment. It's too hot to go out yet."

"I suppose there is no hurry."

"How are you really?"

"I'm fine. I'm perfectly all right."

"No. I mean really."

"I'm all right. I can't sleep without a light of some sort. That's all I have now."

9. A potent Italian brandy.

1. Military vehicles for artillery, often used for auxiliary troop transport.

"I said it should have been trepanned.<sup>2</sup> I'm no doctor but I know that."

"Well, they thought it was better to have it absorb, and that's what I got. What's the matter? I don't seem crazy to you, do I?"

"You seem in top-hole shape."

"It's a hell of a nuisance once they've had you certified as nutty," Nick said. "No one ever has any confidence in you again."

"I would take a nap, Nicolo," Paravicini said. "This isn't battalion headquarters as we used to know it. We're just waiting to be pulled out. You oughtn't to go out in the heat now—it's silly. Use that bunk."

"I might just lie down," Nick said.

Nick lay on the bunk. He was very disappointed that he felt this way and more disappointed, even, that it was so obvious to Captain Paravicini. This was not as large a dugout as the one where that platoon of the class of 1899,<sup>3</sup> just out at the front, got hysterics during the bombardment before the attack, and Para had had him walk them two at a time outside to show them nothing would happen, wearing his own chin strap tight across the mouth to keep his lips quiet. Knowing they could not hold it when they took it. Knowing it was all a bloody balls—If he can't stop crying, break his nose to give him something else to think about. I'd shoot one but it's too late now. They'd all be worse. Break his nose. They've put it back to five-twenty. We've only got four minutes more. Break that other silly bugger's nose and kick his silly ass out of here. Do you think they'll go over? If they don't, shoot two and try to scoop the others out some way. Keep behind them, sergeant. It's no use to walk ahead and find there's nothing coming behind you. Bail them out as you go. What a bloody balls. All right. That's right. Then, looking at the watch, in that quiet tone, that valuable quiet tone, "Savoia."<sup>4</sup> Making it cold, no time to get it, he couldn't find his own after the cave-in, one whole end had caved in; it was that started them; making it cold up that slope the only time he hadn't done it stinking. And after they came back the telefrica house burned, it seemed, and some of the wounded got down four days later and some did not get down, but we went up and we went back and we came down—we always came down. And there was

2. An operation on the skull, usually undertaken in treatment of a head injury. But in the earlier sketch in *In Our Time*, the injury was reported as spinal. The point, of course, is Nick's apprehension of some permanent loss of personality, reflected in the fantasy that follows. See the phrase "[wounded] in various places" near the end of the story.

3. I.e., those born in 1899; subject to

Italian selective service, they would just have reached the front lines in 1917, the year of the events in this story, and the year in which Hemingway himself, in advance of American participation in the war, enlisted in the Italian army and was, like Nick Adams, wounded and hospitalized.

4. Here the signal for zero hour, at which action is begun; actually the name of an Italian province.

Gaby Delys,<sup>5</sup> oddly enough, with feathers on; you called me baby doll a year ago tadada you said that I was rather nice to know tadada with feathers on, with feathers off, the great Gaby, and my name's Harry Pilcer, too, we used to step out of the far side of the taxis when it got steep going up the hill and he could see that hill every night when he dreamed with *Sacré Cœur*,<sup>6</sup> blown white, like a soap bubble. Sometimes his girl was there and sometimes she was with some one else and he could not understand that, but those were the nights the river ran so much wider and stiller than it should and outside of Fossalta there was a low house painted yellow with willows all around it and a low stable and there was a canal, and he had been there a thousand times and never seen it, but there it was every night as plain as the hill, only it frightened him.<sup>7</sup> That house meant more than anything and every night he had it. That was what he needed but it frightened him especially when the boat lay there quietly in the willows on the canal, but the banks weren't like this river. It was all lower, as it was at Portogrande, where they had seen them come wallowing across the flooded ground holding the rifles high until they fell with them in the water. Who ordered that one? If it didn't get so damned mixed up he could follow it all right. That was why he noticed everything in such detail to keep it all straight so he would know just where he was, but suddenly it confused without reason as now, he lying in a bunk at battalion headquarters, with Para commanding a battalion and he in a bloody American uniform. He sat up and looked around; they all watching him. Para was gone out. He lay down again.

The Paris part came earlier and he was not frightened of it except when she had gone off with some one else and the fear that they might take the same driver twice. That was what frightened about that. Never about the front. He never dreamed about the front now any more but what frightened him so that he could not get rid of it was that long yellow house and the different width of the river. Now he was back here at the river, he had gone through that same town, and there was no house. Nor was the river that way. Then where did he go each night and what was the peril, and why would he wake, soaking wet, more frightened than he had ever been in a bombardment, because of a house and a long stable and a canal?

5. The beginning of Nick's fantasy; he recalls the attack in which he was wounded, and his mind goes again, as before. Gaby Delys, a sensational entertainer, whose enticing songs and dances are recalled below, died in Paris in 1920. Harry Pilcer was for a time her companion and song writer.

6. A church built in the Romanesque-Byzantine style, crowning the Butte

Montmartre, in the Bohemian quarter of Paris, and visible from long distances.

7. This is a description of the place where he was wounded, but it is not entirely clear at this point. The wound's significance is fully revealed in *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), where Nick is, for all practical purposes, reincarnated as Colonel Dick Cantwell.

He sat up, swung his legs carefully down; they stiffened any time they were out straight for long; returned the stares of the adjutant, the signallers and the two runners by the door and put on his cloth-covered trench helmet.

"I regret the absence of the chocolate, the postal-cards and cigarettes," he said. "I am, however, wearing the uniform."

"The major is coming back at once," the adjutant said. In that army an adjutant is not a commissioned officer.

"The uniform is not very correct," Nick told them. "But it gives you the idea. There will be several millions of Americans here shortly."

"Do you think they will send Americans down here?" asked the adjutant.

"Oh, absolutely. Americans twice as large as myself, healthy, with clean hearts, sleep at night, never been wounded, never been blown up, never had their heads caved in, never been scared, don't drink, faithful to the girls they left behind them, many of them never had crabs, wonderful chaps. You'll see."

"Are you an Italian?" asked the adjutant.

"No, American. Look at the uniform. Spagnolini made it but it's not quite correct."

"A North or South American?"

"North," said Nick. He felt it coming on now. He would quiet down.

"But you speak Italian."

"Why not? Do you mind if I speak Italian? Haven't I a right to speak Italian?"

"You have Italian medals."

"Just the ribbons and the papers. The medals come later. Or you give them to people to keep and the people go away; or they are lost with your baggage. You can purchase others in Milan. It is the papers that are of importance. You must not feel badly about them. You will have some yourself if you stay at the front long enough."

"I am a veteran of the Iritrea campaign," said the adjutant stiffly. "I fought in Tripoli."

"It's quite something to have met you," Nick put out his hand. "Those must have been trying days. I noticed the ribbons. Were you, by any chance, on the Carso?"

"I have just been called up for this war. My class was too old."

"At one time I was under the age limit," Nick said. "But now I am reformed out of the war."

"But why are you here now?"

"I am demonstrating the American uniform," Nick said. "Don't you think it is very significant? It is a little tight in the collar but soon you will see untold millions wearing this uniform swarm-

ing like locusts. The grasshopper, you know, what we call the grasshopper in America, is really a locust. The true grasshopper is small and green and comparatively feeble. You must not, however, make a confusion with the seven-year locust or cicada which emits a peculiar sustained sound which at the moment I cannot recall. I try to recall it but I cannot. I can almost hear it and then it is quite gone. You will pardon me if I break off our conversation?"

"See if you can find the major," the adjutant said to one of the two runners. "I can see you have been wounded," he said to Nick.

"In various places," Nick said. "If you are interested in scars I can show you some very interesting ones but I would rather talk about grasshoppers. What we call grasshoppers that is; and what are, really, locusts. These insects at one time played a very important part in my life. It might interest you and you can look at the uniform while I am talking."

The adjutant made a motion with his hand to the second runner who went out.

"Fix your eyes on the uniform. Spagnolini made it, you know. You might as well look, too," Nick said to the signallers. "I really have no rank. We're under the American consul. It's perfectly all right for you to look. You can stare, if you like. I will tell you about the American locust. We always preferred one that we called the medium-brown. They last the best in the water and fish prefer them. The larger ones that fly making a noise somewhat similar to that produced by a rattlesnake rattling his rattlers, a very dry sound, have vivid colored wings, some are bright red, others yellow barred with black, but their wings go to pieces in the water and they make a very blowsy bait, while the medium-brown is a plump, compact, succulent hopper that I can recommend as far as one may well recommend something you gentlemen will probably never encounter. But I must insist that you will never gather a sufficient supply of these insects for a day's fishing by pursuing them with your hands or trying to hit them with a bat. That is sheer nonsense and a useless waste of time. I repeat, gentlemen, that you will get nowhere at it. The correct procedure, and one which should be taught all young officers at every small-arms course if I had anything to say about it, and who knows but what I will have, is the employment of a seine or net made of common mosquito netting. Two officers holding this length of netting at alternate ends, or let us say one at each end, stoop, hold the bottom extremity of the net in one hand and the top extremity in the other and run into the wind. The hoppers, flying with the wind, fly against the length of netting and are imprisoned in its folds. It is no trick at all to catch a very great quantity indeed, and no officer, in my opinion, should be without a length of mosquito netting suitable for the impro-

visation of one of these grasshopper scenes. I hope I have made myself clear, gentlemen. Are there any questions? If there is anything in the course you do not understand please ask questions. Speak up. None? Then I would like to close on this note. In the words of that great soldier and gentleman, Sir Henry Wilson:<sup>8</sup> Gentlemen, either you must govern or you must be governed. Let me repeat it. Gentlemen, there is one thing I would like to have you remember. One thing I would like you to take with you as you leave this room. Gentlemen, either you must govern—or you must be governed. That is all, gentlemen. Good-day.”

He removed his cloth-covered helmet, put it on again and, stooping, went out the low entrance of the dugout. Para, accompanied by the two runners, was coming down the line of the sunken road. It was very hot in the sun and Nick removed the helmet.

“There ought to be a system for wetting these things,” he said. “I shall wet this one in the river.” He started up the bank.

“Nicolo,” Paravicini called. “Nicolo. Where are you going?”

“I don’t really have to go.” Nick came down the slope, holding the helmet in his hands. “They’re a damned nuisance wet or dry. Do you wear yours all the time?”

“All the time,” said Para. “It’s making me bald. Come inside.”

Inside Para told him to sit down.

“You know they’re absolutely no damned good,” Nick said. “I remember when they were a comfort when we first had them, but I’ve seen them full of brains too many times.”

“Nicolo,” Para said. “I think you should go back. I think it would be better if you didn’t come up to the line until you had those supplies. There’s nothing here for you to do. If you move around, even with something worth giving away, the men will group and that invites shelling. I won’t have it.”

“I know it’s silly,” Nick said. “It wasn’t my idea. I heard the brigade was here so I thought I would see you or some one else I knew. I could have gone to Zenzon or to San Dona. I’d like to go to San Dona to see the bridge again.”

“I won’t have you circulating around to no purpose,” Captain Paravicini said.

“All right,” said Nick. He felt it coming on again.

“You understand?”

“Of course,” said Nick. He was trying to hold it in.

“Anything of that sort should be done at night.”

“Naturally,” said Nick. He knew he could not stop it now.

“You see, I am commanding the battalion,” Para said.

“And why shouldn’t you be?” Nick said. Here it came. “You can read and write, can’t you?”

8. Sir Henry Hughes Wilson (1864–1922), British army leader.

"Yes," said Para gently.

"The trouble is you have a damned small battalion to command. As soon as it gets to strength again they'll give you back your company. Why don't they bury the dead? I've seen them now. I don't care about seeing them again. They can bury them any time as far as I'm concerned and it would be much better for you. You'll all get bloody sick."

"Where did you leave your bicycle?"

"Inside the last house."

"Do you think it will be all right?"

"Don't worry," Nick said. "I'll go in a little while."

"Lie down a little while, Nicolo."

"All right."

He shut his eyes, and in place of the man with the beard who looked at him over the sights of the rifle, quite calmly before squeezing off, the white flash and clublike impact, on his knees, hot-sweet choking, coughing it onto the rock while they went past him, he saw a long, yellow house with a low stable and the river much wider than it was and stiller. "Christ," he said, "I might as well go."

He stood up.

"I'm going, Para," he said. "I'll ride back now in the afternoon. If any supplies have come I'll bring them down tonight. If not I'll come at night when I have something to bring."

"It is still hot to ride," Captain Paravicini said.

"You don't need to worry," Nick said. "I'm all right now for quite a while. I had one then but it was easy. They're getting much better. I can tell when I'm going to have one because I talk so much."

"I'll send a runner with you."

"I'd rather you didn't. I know the way."

"You'll be back soon?"

"Absolutely."

"Let me send——"

"No," said Nick. "As a mark of confidence."

"Well, *Ciaou*<sup>9</sup> then."

"*Ciaou*," said Nick. He started back along the sunken road toward where he had left the bicycle. In the afternoon the road would be shady once he had passed the canal. Beyond that there were trees on both sides that had not been shelled at all. It was on that stretch that, marching, they had once passed the Terza Savoia cavalry regiment riding in the snow with their lances. The horses' breath made plumes in the cold air. No, that was somewhere else. Where was that?

9. Usually *ciao*; Italian, a familiar term of farewell, equivalent to our "so long!"

"I'd better get to that damned bicycle," Nick said to himself. "I don't want to lose the way to Fornaci."

1933

## THOMAS WOLFE

(1900-1938)

When Thomas Wolfe died, at the age of thirty-eight, he left four large novels, two of them not then published, besides numerous stories and miscellaneous writings. Both the man and his work were in certain respects unprecedented. The novels were not experimental in the formal sense; they used established methods of objective narration; yet, especially in the first two, the presence of the author himself was almost overwhelming. It became evident that Wolfe was his own character, whether Eugene Gant or George Weber, in all four books; and that he was producing a kind of domestic *roman à clef* in which the identifiable characters were not historical figures, but his own family and associates, depicted in scenes and situations which corresponded with those of his own life, whether in his native Asheville, North Carolina—which he called Altamont—or at the university, or in New York.

This was not the autobiographical novel as Dickens, for example, wrote it in *David Copperfield*, by inventing new events and characters to be placed within the chronological framework of his own life. Wolfe did not "invent" his important characters in the usual sense of the word; he discovered them. What

he invented was a method of analyzing experience that did not need to be invented—his own. What he attempted was a new novel of spiritual exploration, and his *terra incognita* was composed of the people and the experience which he had absorbed as a result of his insatiable appetite for life.

That life began on October 3, 1900, at Asheville, then primarily a resort town, situated in the western North Carolina highlands. His father, the Oliver Gant of the novels, was a stonemason, and his mother, portrayed as Eliza Gant, managed a residential boardinghouse in real life also. Like Eugene Gant in *Look Homeward, Angel*, Tom Wolfe did odd jobs, sold papers and magazines, and wondered about his father, who, like Oliver in "An Angel on the Porch," combined earthiness with quixotic sentiment and the habit of reciting poetry to any who would listen.

Huge in frame and abounding in energy, young Wolfe went down to the University of North Carolina in 1916 with his voracious appetite for life, knowledge, experience, food, smells, sensation, and in fact the world. There he read widely, began to write, and studied the theater in courses under the talented



Frederick Koch, founder of the famous Carolina Playmakers. For them the young student wrote two plays, one later published in a collection by Professor Koch. Upon his graduation in 1920 Wolfe enrolled at Harvard, where he was a student in the "47 Workshop" of George Pierce Baker, and took his M.A. It was inevitable that he should bring with him a manuscript play when he went to New York in 1922, but producers were not impressed with this or later attempts, and Wolfe cherished for years his defeated first love for the theater. In the meantime, he supported himself by teaching composition at New York University while pouring out the stored material of his first novel, and until 1930 he continued to teach there intermittently.

Maxwell Perkins, a talented editor of the staff of Charles Scribner's Sons, has minimized the exaggerated legend that he was primarily responsible for Wolfe's first two novels. It is certain, however, that Wolfe had an enormous manuscript, whose bulk obscured the organic organization of a novel, and that after other editors had declined it, Perkins recognized his opportunity and obligation. He suggested the means by which the author could set aside certain materials for possible future use and could concentrate and give more formal order to the manuscript, which appeared as *Look Homeward, Angel* in 1929.

It was a distinguished success, and Wolfe's proposal for foreign travel to provide background for his novels won him a Guggenheim Fellowship which took him

in 1930-1931 to Europe. He was particularly interested in Germany, where his visit provided fundamental materials for his last two novels, and laid the foundations for his quite considerable foreign recognition. The remainder of his short life was given to the prodigious literary re-creation of an accumulation of experience which he himself recognized as "gargantuan." His twice-renewed love affair with a famous and talented artist and designer both harrowed and enriched his spirit. His second novel, *Of Time and the River*, appeared in 1935, and his collection of short stories, *From Death to Morning*, also was published in that year. Still the furious fever of life and composition continued to drive him. By May of 1938 he had finished a third novel, and he had also placed in his publisher's hands the outline of a fourth, together with manuscript material including the entire text but still needing final pruning and organization. In July he was stricken by influenza, and pneumonia threatened. The febrile excitement of his creative life may at last have worn down his gigantic strength; at any rate, while recovering he contracted a cerebral infection, which caused his death on September 15, 1938.

*The Web and the Rock* appeared posthumously in 1939, and *You Can't Go Home Again* in 1940. The protagonist in these works is George Webber, not Eugene Gant, but both are exaggerations, simplifications, and explanations of Thomas Wolfe himself. The fact that they are also the universal youth in quest

of spiritual security and selfhood is what raises the novels above the literature of "confessions" into the realm of creative originality.

Wolfe matured rapidly. His prose was lyrical, befitting the subjective nature of his novels, and it was steadily enriched by his unusual sense of verbal associations and by his mammoth literary memory. The range of his imagination, like that of Whitman, at last embodied the myth of his country: her great cities interlaced by railroads no less than the continental immensity of her natural domain were symbols of the amplitude and creative energies of mankind, the final object of his study.

There is no collected edition of Wolfe's writings. In addition to the major titles named in the text above are the following: *The Story of a Novel*, 1936, Wolfe's revealing comment upon his personality and his work; *The Hills Beyond*, 1941, short stories; and *Manerhouse, A Play*, 1948. *Thomas Wolfe's Letters to His Mother*, 1943, was edited by J. S. Terry; *The Letters of Thomas Wolfe*, 1956, by Elizabeth Nowell.

A full-length biography is Elizabeth Nowell, *Thomas Wolfe*, 1960. Other biographical and critical appraisals are: E. C. Aswell, "A Note on Thomas Wolfe," prefatory to *The Hills Beyond*; H. J. Muller, *Thomas Wolfe*, 1947; Pamela H. Johnson, *Hungry Gulliver: An English Critical Appraisal of Thomas Wolfe*, 1948; Louis D. Rubin, *Thomas Wolfe, The Weather of His Youth*, 1955; and Floyd D. Watkins, *Thomas Wolfe's Characters*, 1957. Two volumes covering Wolfe's years at New York University are T. C. Pollock and Oscar Cargill, *Thomas Wolfe at Washington Square*, 1954; and *The Correspondence of Thomas Wolfe and Homer Andrew Watt*, edited by T. C. Pollock and Oscar Cargill, 1954.

## An Angel on the Porch<sup>1</sup>

Late on an afternoon in young summer Queen Elizabeth came quickly up into the square past Gant's marbleshop. Surrounded by the stones, the slabs, the cold carved lambs of death, the stone-cutter leaned upon the rail and talked with Jannadeau, the faithful burly Swiss who, fenced in a little rented place among Gant's marbles, was probing with delicate monocled intentness into the entrails of a watch.

"There goes the Queen," said Gant, stopping for a moment their debate.

"A smart woman. A pippin as sure as you're born," he added, with relish.

He bowed gallantly with a sweeping flourish of his great-boned frame of six feet five. "Good evening, madam."

She replied with a bright smile of friendliness which may have had in it the flicker of old memory, including Jannadeau with a cheerful impersonal nod. For just a moment more she paused, turning her candid stare upon smooth granite slabs of death,

1. "An Angel on the Porch," the first piece of major fiction published by Thomas Wolfe, appeared as a short story in *Scribner's Magazine* for August, 1929. The same year it appeared again as Chapter 19 of Wolfe's first novel,

*Look Homeward, Angel*. Soon after the author's death, his publishers reprinted this, his first story, side by side with his last story, "The Party at Jack's," in *Scribner's Magazine* for May, 1939.

carved lambs and cherubim within the shop, and finally on an angel stationed beside the door upon Gant's little porch. Then, with her brisk, firm tread, she passed the shop, untroubled by the jeweller's heavy stare of wounded virtue, as he glowered up from his dirty littered desk, following her vanishing form with a guttural mutter of distaste.

They resumed their debate:

"And you may mark my words," proceeded Gant, wetting his big thumb, as if he had never been interrupted, and continuing his attack upon the Democratic party, and all the bad weather, fire, famine, and pestilence that attended its administration, "if they get in again we'll have soup-kitchens, the banks will go to the wall, and your guts will grease your backbone before another winter's over."

The Swiss thrust out a dirty hand toward the library he consulted in all disputed areas—a greasy edition of "The World Almanac," three years old—saying triumphantly, after a moment of dirty thumbing, in strange wrenched accent: "Ah—just as I thought: the *muni-cip-al* taxation of Milwaukee under *Democ-ratic* administration in 1905 was two dollars and twenty-five cents the hundred, the lowest it had been in years. I cannot *ima-gine* why the total revenue is not given."

Judiciously reasonable, statistically argumentative, the Swiss argued with animation against his Titan, picking his nose with blunt black fingers, his broad yellow face breaking into flaccid creases, as he laughed gutturally at Gant's unreason, and at the rolling periods of his rhetoric.

Thus they talked in the shadow of the big angel that stood just beyond the door upon Gant's porch, leering down upon their debate with a smile of idiot benevolence. Thus they talked, while Elizabeth passed by, in the cool damp of Gant's fantastical brick shack, surrounded by the stones, the slabs, the cold carved lambs of death. And as they talked the gray and furtive eyes of the stone-cutter, which darkened so seldom now with the shade of the old hunger—for stone and the cold wrought face of an angel—looked out into the square at all the little pullulation of the town, touched, as that woman passed his door with gallant tread, by a memory he thought had died forever. The lost words. The forgotten faces. Where? When?

He was getting on to sixty-five, his long, erect body had settled, he stooped a little. He spoke of old age often, and he wept in his tirades now because of his great right hand, stiffened by rheumatism, which once had carved so cunningly the dove, the lamb, the cold joined hands of death (but never the soft stone face of an angel). Soaked in pity, he referred to himself as "The poor old cripple who has to provide for the whole family."

That proud and sensual flesh was on its way to dust.

The indolence of age and disintegration was creeping over him. He rose now a full hour later, he came to his shop punctually, but he spent long hours of the day extended on the worn leather couch of his office, or in gossip with Jannadeau, bawdy old Liddell, Cardiac, his doctor, and Fagg Sluder, who had salted away his fortune in two big buildings on the square, and was at the present moment tilted comfortably in a chair before the fire department, gossiping eagerly with members of the ball club, whose chief support he was. It was after five o'clock, the game was over.

Negro laborers, grisly with a white coating of cement, sloped down past the shop on their way home. The draymen dispersed slowly, a slouchy policeman loafed down the steps of the city hall picking his teeth, and on the market side, from high grilled windows, there came the occasional howls of a drunken negress. Life buzzed slowly like a fly.

The sun had reddened slightly, there was a cool flowing breath from the hills, a freshening relaxation over the tired earth, the hope, the ecstasy, of evening in the air. In slow pulses the thick plume of fountain rose, fell upon itself, and slapped the pool in lazy rhythms. A wagon rattled leanly over the big cobbles; beyond the firemen, the grocer Bradly wound up his awning with slow, creaking revolutions.

Across the square at its other edge the young virgins of the eastern part of town walked lightly home in chattering groups. They came to town at four o'clock in the afternoon, walked up and down the little avenue several times, entered a shop to purchase small justifications, and finally went into the chief drugstore, where the bucks of the town loafed and drawled in lazy, alert groups. It was their club, their brasserie, the forum of the sexes. With confident smiles the young men detached themselves from their group and strolled back to booth and table.

"Hey theah! Whcahd you come from?"

"Move ovah thecah, lady. I want to tawk to you."

Gant looked and saw. His thin mouth was tickled by a faint sly smile. He wet his big thumb quickly.

While his fugitive eyes roved over the east end of the square, Gant talked with Jannadeau. Before the shop the comely matrons of the town came up from the market. From time to time they smiled, seeing him, and he bowed sweepingly. Such lovely manners!

"The king of England," he observed, "is only a figurehead. He doesn't begin to have the power of the President of the United States."

"His power is severely limited," said Jannadeau gutturally, "by custom but not by statute. In actuality he is still one of the most

powerful monarchs in the world." His thick black fingers probed carefully into the viscera of a watch.

"The late King Edward, for all his faults," said Gant, wetting his thumb, "was a smart man. This fellow they've got now is a nonentity and a nincompoop." He grinned faintly, with pleasure, at this ghost of his old rhetoric, glancing furtively at the Swiss to see if the big words told.

His uneasy eyes followed carefully the stylish carriage of Queen Elizabeth's well-clad figure as she came down by the shop again. She smiled pleasantly, bound homeward for her latticed terrace. He bowed elaborately.

"Good evening, madam," he said.

She disappeared. In a moment she came back decisively and mounted the broad steps. He watched her approach with quickened pulses. Twelve years.

"How's the madam?" he said gallantly as she crossed the porch. "Elizabeth, I was just telling Jannadeau you were the most stylish woman in town."

"Well, that's mighty sweet of you, Mr. Gant," she said in her cool, poised voice. "You've got a good word for every one."

She gave a bright, pleasant nod to Jannadeau, who swung his huge scowling head ponderously around and muttered at her.

"Why, Elizabeth," said Gant, "you haven't changed an inch in fifteen years. I don't believe you're a day older."

She was thirty-eight and cheerfully aware of it.

"Oh, yes," she said laughing. "You're only saying that to make me feel good. I'm no chicken any more."

She had a pale, clear skin, pleasantly freckled, carrot-colored hair, and a thin mouth live with humor. Her figure was trim and strong—no longer young. She had a great deal of energy, distinction, and elegance in her manner.

"How are all the girls, Elizabeth?" he asked kindly.

Her face grew sad. She began to pull her gloves off.

"That's what I came in to see you about," she said. "I lost one of them last week."

"Yes," said Gant gravely, "I was sorry to hear of that."

"She was the best girl I had," said Elizabeth. "I'd have done anything in the world for her. We did everything we could," she added. "I've no regrets on that score. I had a doctor and two trained nurses by her all the time."

She opened her black leather handbag, thrust her gloves into it, and pulling out a small blue-bordered handkerchief began to weep quietly.

"Huh-huh-huh-huh-huh," said Gant, shaking his head. "Too

bad, too bad, too bad. Come back to my office," he said. They went back to the dusty little room and sat down. Elizabeth dried her eyes.

"What was her name?" he asked.

"We called her Lily—her full name was Lilian Reed."

"Why, I knew that girl," he exclaimed. "I spoke to her not over two weeks ago." He convinced himself permanently that this was true.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "she went like that—one hemorrhage right after another. Nobody ever knew she was sick until last Wednesday. Friday she was gone." She wept again.

"T-t-t-t-t," he clucked regretfully. "Too bad, too bad. She was pretty as a picture."

"I couldn't have loved her more, Mr. Gant," said Elizabeth, "if she had been my own daughter."

"How old was she?" he asked.

"Twenty-two," said Elizabeth, beginning to weep again.

"What a pity! What a pity!" he agreed. "Did she have any people?"

"No one who would do anything for her," Elizabeth said. "Her mother died when she was thirteen—she was born out here on the Bectree Fork—and her father," she added indignantly, "is a mean old devil who's never done anything for her or any one else. He didn't even come to her funeral."

"He will be punished," said Gant darkly.

"As sure as there's a God in heaven," Elizabeth agreed, "he'll get what's coming to him in hell. The dirty old crook!" she continued virtuously, "I hope he rots!"

"You can depend upon it," he said grimly. "He will. Ah, Lord." He was silent a moment while he shook his head with slow regret.

"A pity, a pity," he muttered. "So young." He had the moment of triumph all men have when they hear some one has died. A moment, too, of grisly fear—sixty-four.

"I couldn't have loved her more," said Elizabeth, "if she'd been one of my own. A young girl like that with all her life before her."

"It's pretty sad when you come to think of it," he said. "By God, it is!"

"And she was such a fine girl, Mr. Gant," said Elizabeth, weeping softly. "She had such a bright future before her. She had more opportunities than I ever had, and I suppose you know"—she spoke modestly—"what I've done."

"Why," he exclaimed, startled, "you're a rich woman, Elizabeth—damned if I don't believe you are. You own property all over town."

"I wouldn't say that," she answered, "but I've got enough to

live on without ever doing another lick of work. I've had to work hard all my life. From now on I don't intend to turn my hand over."

She looked at him with a shy, pleased smile, and touched a coil of her fine hair with a small competent hand. He looked at her attentively, noting with pleasure her firm uncorseted hips, moulded compactly into her tailored suit, and her cocked comely legs tapering to graceful feet, shod in neat little slippers of tan. She was firm, strong, washed, and elegant—a faint scent of lilac hovered over her. He looked at her candid eyes, lucently gray, and saw that she was quite a great lady.

"By God, Elizabeth," he said, "you're a fine-looking woman!"

"I've had a good life," she said. "I've taken care of myself."

They had always known each other—since first they met. They had no excuses, no questions, no replies. The world fell away from them. In the silence they heard the pulsing slap of the fountain, the high laughter of bawdry in the square. He took a book of models from the desk and began to turn its slick pages. They showed modest blocks of Georgia marble and Vermont granite.

"I don't want any of these," she said impatiently. "I've already made up my mind. I know what I want."

He looked up surprised. "What is it?"

"I want the angel out front."

His face was startled and unwilling. He gnawed the corner of his thin lip. No one knew how fond he was of the angel. Publicly he called it his white elephant. He cursed it and said he had been a fool to order it. For six years it had stood on the porch weathering in all the wind and rain. It was now brown and fly-specked. But it had come from Carrara in Italy, and it held a stone lily delicately in one hand. The other hand was lifted in benediction, it was poised clumsily upon the ball of one phthisic foot, and its stupid white face wore a smile of soft stone idiocy.

In his rages Gant sometimes directed vast climaxes of abuse at the angel. "Fiend out of hell," he roared, "you have impoverished me, you have ruined me, you have cursed my declining years, and now you will crush me to death—fearful, awful, and unnatural monster that you are."

But sometimes when he was drunk he fell weeping on his knees before it, called it Cynthia, the name of his first wife, and entreated its love, forgiveness, and blessing for its sinful but repentant boy. There was from the square laughter.

"What's the matter?" said Elizabeth. "Don't you want to sell it?"

"It will cost you a good deal, Elizabeth," he said evasively.

"I don't care," she answered positively. "I've got the money. How much do you want?"

He was silent, thinking for a moment of the place where the angel stood. He knew he had nothing to cover or obliterate that place—it left a barren crater in his heart.

"All right," he said finally. "You can have it for what I paid for it—four hundred and twenty dollars."

She took a thick sheaf of bank notes from her purse and counted the money out for him. He pushed it back.

"No. Pay me when the job's finished and it has been set up. You want some sort of inscription, don't you?"

"Yes. There's her full name, age, place of birth, and so on," she said, giving him a scrawled envelope. "I want some poetry, too—something that suits a young girl taken off like this."

He pulled his tattered little book of inscriptions from a pigeonhole and thumbed its pages, reading her a quatrain here and there. To each she shook her head. Finally he said:

"How's this one, Elizabeth?" He read:

"She went away in beauty's flower,  
Before her youth was spent,  
Ere life and love had lived its hour  
God called her, and she went.

Yet whispers Faith upon the wind:  
No grief to *her* was given.  
She left *your* love and went to find  
A greater one in heaven."

"Oh, that's lovely—lovely!" she said. "I want that one."

"Yes," he agreed, "I think that's the best one."

In the musty, cool smell of his little office they got up. Her gallant figure reached his shoulder. She buttoned her kid gloves over the small pink haunch of her palms and glanced about her. His battered sofa filled one wall, the line of his long body was printed in the leather. She looked up at him. His face was sad and grave. They remembered.

"It's a long time, Elizabeth," he said.

They walked slowly to the front through aisled marbles. Sentinelled just beyond the wooden doors the angel leered vacantly down. Jannadeau drew his great head turtlewise a little farther into the protective hunch of his burly shoulders. They went out into the porch.

The moon stood already like its own phantom in the clear-washed skies of evening. A little boy with an empty paper delivery-bag swung lithely by, his freckled nostrils dilating pleasantly with hunger and the fancied smell of supper. He passed, and for a moment, as they stood at the porch edge, all life seemed frozen in a



picture: the firemen and Fagg Sluder had seen Gant, whispered, and were now looking toward him; a policeman, at the high side-porch of the police court, leaned on the rail and stared; at the near edge of the central plot below the fountain a farmer bent for water at a bubbling jet, rose dripping, and stared; from the tax collector's office, city hall, up-stairs, Yancy, huge, meaty, shirt-sleeved, stared.

And in that second the slow pulse of the fountain was suspended, life was held, like an arrested gesture, in photographic abeyance, and Gant felt himself alone move deathward in a world of seemings as, in 1910, a man might find himself again in a picture taken on the grounds of the Chicago Fair, when he was thirty, and his moustache black; and, noting the bustled ladies and the derbied men fixed in the second's pollulation, remember the dead instant, seek beyond the borders for what (he knew) was there. Or as a veteran who finds himself upon his elbow near Ulysses Grant, before the march, in pictures of the Civil War, and sees a dead man on a horse. Or I should say, like some completed Don, who finds himself again before a tent in Scotland in his youth, and notes a cricket-bat long lost and long forgotten; the face of a poet who had died, and young men and the tutor as they looked that Long Vacation when they read nine hours a day for greats.

Where now? Where after? Where then?



# The Poetry of Idea and Order

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WALLACE STEVENS

(1879-1955)

Wallace Stevens created his poetry as a gifted nonprofessional, less concerned about promoting his literary reputation than about perfecting what he wrote. This passion for perfection is apparent in his disciplined thought, his intense and brilliant craftsmanship, and the meticulous propriety of his language, upon which he imposed the double burden of his wit and his faith that the clarification of the inner significance of an idea is a high function of poetry. It has been generally assumed that the intellectualist tendencies of a number of modern poets represent their alienation from society and a desire for escape. This is certainly not true of Stevens. His work is primarily motivated by the belief that "ideas of order," that is, true ideas, correspond with an innate order in nature and the universe, and that it is the high privilege of individuals and mankind to seek to discover this correspondence. Hence, many of his best poems derive their emotional

power from reasoned revelation. This philosophical intention is emphasized by the titles which Stevens gave to his volumes—for example, *Harmonium*, *Ideas of Order*, and *Parts of a World*.

Wallace Stevens was certainly not an alienated escapist in his personal life. A successful lawyer and corporation executive, he became a discriminating enthusiast of the arts and of the sophisticated expressions of the good life which he found at home and abroad. Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 1879. He prepared for a career in law at Harvard University and at New York University Law School. Admitted to the bar in 1904, he engaged in general practice in New York City until 1916, when he became associated with the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. In 1934 he became vice-president of this insurance company, and he continued in its service until his retirement. Although he did not collect a volume of his poems until 1922.

when he was already forty-four, he was actually one of the older generation of the "new" poets, who, after 1910, appeared in the flourishing little magazines, especially *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. *Harmonium* (1923) established his stature among the few poets of ideas.

*Harmonium* was revised and somewhat enlarged in 1931; meanwhile Stevens' accumulation of new poems, while slow, was steady, and the occasional appearance of one of them in a magazine gave evidence of his continued absorption with ideas of increasing subtlety. He perfected a style that brilliantly embodied his extraordinary wit in corresponding rhythmic and tonal effects, and in his ability to recall simultaneously the essential meaning and the connotative suggestions of a particular word. Twelve years elapsed without the appearance of a new volume, but from 1935 to 1937 there were three,

each of considerable size, including his much admired *Man with the Blue Guitar*. Thereafter Stevens' volumes appeared at shorter intervals, and he assumed a position of foremost authority among the poets of the advanced and difficult form which he practiced. He was the recipient of the Bollingen Prize in Poetry for 1949. Stevens died in 1955.

The definitive edition, to date, is *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, 1954. Other volumes are *Harmonium*, 1923, revised and enlarged 1931, 1937; *Ideas of Order*, 1935; *Owl's Clover*, 1936; *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, 1937; *Parts of a World*, 1942, revised, 1951; *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, 1942; *Esthétique du Mal*, 1944; *Transport to Summer*, 1947; *Three Academic Pieces*, 1947; *A Primitive Like an Orb*, 1948; *The Auroras of Autumn*, 1950; *The Man with the Blue Guitar and Ideas of Order*, combined edition, 1952; *Selected Poems*, 1953; and *Opus Posthumous*, 1957, edited by S. F. Morse. *The Necessary Angel* \* \* \*, 1951, expounds Stevens' theory of poetry.

Major critical studies are W. V. O'Connor, *The Shaping Spirit* \* \* \*, 1950; S. F. Morse, *Wallace Stevens*, 1950; and R. Pack, *Wallace Stevens: An Approach* \* \* \*, 1958.

## A High-toned Old Christian Woman

Poetry is the supreme fiction,<sup>1</sup> madame.  
Take the moral law and make a nave of it  
And from the nave<sup>2</sup> build haunted heaven. Thus,  
The conscience is converted into palms,  
Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.      s  
We agree in principle. That's clear. But take  
The opposing law and make a peristyle,<sup>3</sup>  
And from the peristyle project a masque<sup>4</sup>

1. Twenty-two years later, Stevens still attached cryptic importance to this phrase. See the poem "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" (1945), collected in *Transport to Summer* (1947).

2. The principal part of a church, for the congregation. The nave generally is lighted by clerestory windows (cf. "heaven").

3. A system of columns surrounding a building or court; sometimes the space thus enclosed. Here it is compared with "nave," which, by contrast, exerts a more obvious upward thrust. Observe that the peristyle is usually associated with pagan (Greek) temples, the nave with Christian churches and cathedrals.

4. A festive dance, or revels, generally employing worldly masquerades.

Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,<sup>5</sup>  
 Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last, 10  
 Is equally converted into palms,<sup>6</sup>  
 Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm,  
 Madame, we are where we began. Allow,  
 Therefore, that in the planetary scene  
 Your disaffected flagellants,<sup>7</sup> well stuffed, 15  
 Smacking their muzzy<sup>8</sup> bellies in parade,  
 Proud of such novelties of the sublime,  
 Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,  
 May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves  
 A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres. 20  
 This will make widows wince: But fictive things"  
 Wink as they will. Wink most when widows wince.

1923

## Peter Quince at the Clavier<sup>1</sup>

### I

Just as my fingers on these keys  
 Make music, so the self-same sounds  
 On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;  
 And thus it is that what I feel, 5  
 Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
 Is music. It is like the strain  
 Waked in the elders by Susanna.<sup>2</sup>

5. The word "bawd" retains from its derivation the association of "merry boldness."

6. Cf. l. 4. Palm leaves have at various times been carried in pagan, Christian, and quite worldly processions. Here they suggest saxophones, lewd instruments, contrasted with "citherns" (l. 5).

7. In many periods the practice of piety has been accompanied by flagellation.

8. Muddled.

9. That is, things created by imaginative power.

1. That is, Peter Quince at the keyboard, here presumably that of a harmonium, since the poem was collected in the poet's first volume, *Harmonium* (1923). In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Act I, Scene 2, Peter Quince appears as director of an "interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding day at night."

Performed by such actors as Bottom, a weaver, Snout, a tinker, and Starveling, a tailor, the interlude degenerates into a madcap farce, although it portrays the "most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby" (cf. Ovid, "Pyramus and Thisbe," *Metamorphoses*, Book IV). Like the elders of the present Susanna story, Ovid's lovers came to their death in defying social convention. In presenting his story, Stevens may also have remembered the advice that Bottom gave Quince (ll. 8-10): "First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow on to a point." The text given here is that of *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1954).

2. The story of Susanna and the elders appears in the History of Susanna, a book of the Old Testament Apocrypha. The alleged incident occurred during the Babylonian captivity, before the death

Of a green evening, clear and warm, 10  
She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.<sup>3</sup> 15

II

In the green water, clear and warm,  
Susanna lay.  
She searched  
The touch of springs,  
And found 20  
Concealed imaginings.  
She sighed,  
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood  
In the cool 25  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass, 30  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering. 35

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned—  
A cymbal crashed,  
And roaring horns. 40

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,<sup>4</sup>  
Came her attendant Byzantines.<sup>5</sup>

of the prophet Daniel, about 534 B.C. Certain Hebrew elders attempted the seduction of Susanna, wife of the beautiful and virtuous Joachim, by the device described in this poem. When Susanna accused them, they counter-charged that she had solicited their attentions. Daniel proved her innocence and the elders were executed.

3. Pizzicati notes, produced by plucking the strings of an instrument instead of bowing, are thin and tinkling and asso-

ciated with the dance; while a Hosanna, a song of praise to God, usually calls for deeper and richer tones.

4. Since the tambourine anciently originated in oriental dancing, the word in this context conveys the apt suggestion of the swish and tinkle of women's garments and metal ornaments.

5. Probably slaves, from Byzantium, now Istanbul in modern Turkey, and previously (after 330 A.D.) known as

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain. 45

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines. 50

## IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing. 55

So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of winter, done repenting.  
So maidens die, to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral. 60

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders; but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping.  
Now, in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory, 65

And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

1923

## The Glass of Water

That the glass would melt in heat,  
That the water would freeze in cold,  
Shows that this object is merely a state,  
One of many, between two poles. So,  
In the metaphysical, there are these poles. 5

Here in the centre stands the glass. Light  
Is the lion that comes down to drink. There  
And in that state, the glass is a pool.  
Ruddy are his eyes and ruddy are his claws  
When light comes down to wet his frothy jaws 10

Constantinople. At the time of Susanna, was a Greek city often attacked by  
in the sixth century B.C., Byzantium enemies.

And in the water winding weeds move round.  
 And there and in another state—the refractions,  
 The *metaphysica*,<sup>6</sup> the plastic parts of poems  
 Crash in the mind—But, fat Jocundus,<sup>7</sup> worrying  
 About what stands here in the centre, not the glass, 15

But in the centre of our lives, this time, this day,  
 It is a state, this spring among the politicians  
 Playing cards. In a village of the indigenes,  
 One would still have to discover. Among the dogs and dung,  
 One would continue to contend with one's ideas. 20  
 1942

## The Candle A Saint

Green is the night, green kindled and apparelled.  
 It is she that walks among astronomers.  
 She strides above the rabbit and the cat,  
 Like a noble figure, out of the sky,  
 Moving among the sleepers, the men, 5  
 Those that lie chanting *green is the night*.  
 Green is the night and out of madness woven,  
 The self-same madness of the astronomers  
 And of him that sees, beyond the astronomers,  
 The topaz rabbit and the emerald cat, 10  
 That sees above them, that sees rise up above them,  
 The noble figure, the essential shadow,  
 Moving and being, the image at its source,  
 The abstract, the archaic queen. Green is the night.  
 1942

6. The word "metaphysics" is derived from the Greek: *meta* "beyond, after" + *physikos* "relating to external na-

ture."  
 7. Latin, literally "the cheerful [or merry] fellow." But note the next word.

## WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883-)

The physician as man of letters, whether Rabelais or Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, has characteristically shown a special knowledge of humanity, a diagnostic attitude toward its frailty

and follies, and a vigorous, often iconoclastic, realism. These characteristics all appear strongly in the work of Dr. William Carlos Williams. He has displayed a probing and clinical realism, and as one taught by science not to be squeamish, he has sought beauty and truth in the vulgar or the common as much as in the uncommon. With this in mind, Wallace Stevens once called Williams' materials "anti-poetic"; he writes not only of the stars in heaven but also of the plums in the icebox, the white chickens beside a red wheelbarrow, the beauty of weeds on the sour land "by the contagious hospital." Like Stevens he is a poet of ideas; but his ideas are inspired, not by philosophical abstractions, as so often with Stevens, but by things, or by the relation of one thing with another, as in "Tract," or by the beauty and composition of the thing, as in "Queen-Ann's-Lace," or by common principles of nature that apply to the life of man, as in "The Pause." Williams' early interest in painting, under the influence of two of his friends, the artists Sheeler and DeMuth, is reflected in his sharp and graphic figures, and in his feeling for form, texture, and color. With such instruments, and with his extraordinary command of the word and of rhythm, he has been at his best a disturbing and thought-provoking poet. If his writing is uneven, and would benefit from judicious editing, it is only fair to remember that his literary work—stories, novels, and poems—has generally been produced in competition with

the demands of an exacting and useful professional life.

William Carlos Williams was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, on September 17, 1883. His mother was of Spanish descent. After attending the Horace Mann High School in New York, and a preparatory school in Switzerland, he began his medical training at the University of Pennsylvania. There he gave what spare time he could find to his early poetry. He was fortunate to develop a friendship with Pound, then a student in the graduate school at the University. After his graduation in 1906, Williams went abroad to take postgraduate work in pediatrics at the University of Leipzig. He renewed his friendship with Pound, who was by then in London and a leader among the young experimental poets, with whom Williams listened to talk of imagism and other *avant-garde* writing. Although Pound included work by Williams in the first imagist anthology, the young physician was an individualistic poet even then, as he has been ever since.

Williams soon returned to Rutherford, where he has practiced medicine since 1910. In 1909 he collected his first volume of poems, inaugurating a literary career that has produced more than twenty volumes of poetry and fiction. For many years he contributed steadily to the little magazines, and he was one of the best-known poets during the flourishing period of the 1920's. In many of his poems, and in the prose essays that often appeared in the same volumes, he kept up a running fire of com-



mentary on his age, its foibles, and its art. At the same time he expressed his devotion to medicine in a highly successful professional career. His practice included an industrial district along the Passaic and in the adjacent city of Paterson. The lives of the less privileged people whom he knew so well are reflected in his poetry, but even more in his novels and in the quite unusual short stories which he has collected in several volumes. *Paterson*, a work in progress since 1946, is an individualistic epic in form, incorporating the history, the characters, and the myths of Paterson from its Indian origins to its industrial present. His lively *Autobiography* (1951) shows the surprising range of his association with the *avant garde* of American letters, especially during the critical period from 1910 to 1930. Williams received the Dial Award for Services to American Literature in 1926, the

Guarantors Prize awarded by *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in 1931, the Loines Award in 1948, and the National Book Award, for *Paterson*, in 1949.

The following collections provide a cross-section of his best work: *Collected Poems, 1921-1931*, 1934; *Complete Collected Poems, 1906-1938*, 1938; *Selected Poems*, 1949; *Collected Later Poetry of William Carlos Williams*, 1950; *Collected Earlier Poems of William Carlos Williams*, 1951; *Paterson*, 4 vols., 1946-1951, collected in one volume 1951; *The Desert Music and Other Poems*, 1954; and *Journey to Love*, 1955. *Paterson, Book V* appeared in 1958. Short stories include *The Knife of the Times*, 1932; *Life Along the Passaic River*, 1938; *Make Light of It*, 1950. His novels are *A Voyage to Paganry*, 1928; *White Mule*, 1937; *In the Money*, 1940; and *The Build-Up*, 1952. Collections of his essays are *The Great American Novel*, 1923; *In the American Grain*, 1925, reissued 1940; and *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*, 1954. *Many Loves*, a play, was produced in 1958. *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, 1957, was edited by J. C. Thirlwall. *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* appeared in 1951. A critical and biographical study is Vivienne Koch, *William Carlos Williams*, 1950.

## Tract

I will teach you my townspeople  
how to perform a funeral—  
for you have it over a troop  
of artists—  
unless one should scour the world—  
you have the ground sense necessary.

5

See! the hearse leads.  
I begin with a design for a hearse.  
For Christ's sake not black!—  
nor white either—and not polished!  
Let it be weathered—like a farm wagon—  
with gilt wheels (this could be

10

1. Cf. the persistent biblical concept of God as immortal Light, and the identification of Christ with the Light in the

Gospels, especially John 1: 1-9; and iii: 19.

applied fresh at small expense)  
 or no wheels at all:  
 a rough dray to drag over the ground. 15

Knock the glass out!  
 My God—glass, my townspeople!  
 For what purpose? Is it for the dead  
 to look out or for us to see  
 how well he is housed or to see 20  
 the flowers or the lack of them—  
 or what?

To keep the rain and snow from him?  
 He will have a heavier rain soon:  
 pebbles and dirt and what not. 25  
 Let there be no glass—  
 and no upholstery! phew!  
 and no little brass rollers  
 and small easy wheels on the bottom—  
 my townspeople what are you thinking of! 30

A rough plain hearse then  
 with gilt wheels and no top at all.  
 On this the coffin lies  
 by its own weight.

No wreaths please— 35  
 especially no hot-house flowers.  
 Some common memento is better,  
 something he prized and is known by:  
 his old clothes—a few books perhaps—  
 God knows what! You realize 40  
 how we are about these things,  
 my townspeople—  
 something will be found—anything—  
 even flowers if he had come to that.  
 So much for the hearse. 45

For heaven's sake though see to the driver!  
 Take off the silk hat! In fact  
 that's no place at all for him  
 up there unceremoniously  
 dragging our friend out to his own dignity! 50  
 Bring him down—bring him down!  
 Low and inconspicuous! I'd not have him ride  
 on the wagon at all—damn him—  
 the undertaker's understrapper!

Let him hold the reins  
and walk at the side  
and inconspicuously too! 55

Then briefly as to yourselves:  
Walk behind—as they do in France,  
seventh class, or if you ride 60  
Hell take curtains! Go with some show  
of inconvenience; sit openly—  
to the weather as to grief.  
Or do you think you can shut grief in?  
What—from us? We who have perhaps 65  
nothing to lose? Share with us  
share with us—it will be money  
in your pockets.

Go now  
I think you are ready.

1920

## Queen-Ann's-Lace

Her body is not so white as  
anemone petals nor so smooth—nor  
so remote a thing. It is a field  
of the wild carrot taking  
the field by force; the grass 5  
does not raise above it.

Here is no question of whiteness,  
white as can be, with a purple mole<sup>2</sup>  
at the center of each flower.

Each flower is a hand's span 10  
of her whiteness. Wherever  
his hand has lain there is  
a tiny purple blemish. Each part  
is a blossom under his touch  
to which the fibers of her being 15  
stem one by one, each to its end,  
until the whole field is a  
white desire, empty, a single stem,  
a cluster, flower by flower,

2. A single purple blossom in the center of the flower head of the Queen Anne's lace, or wild carrot. Actually, the "flower" is an umbel composed of a multitude of such tiny blossoms, all white

except this one, and all joined downward to the top of the main stalk by an intricate system of tiny stems (*cf.* ll. 15-16).

Her wars were bruited in our high window. 5  
 We looked among orchard trees and beyond,  
 Where she took arms against her shadow,  
 Or harried unto the pond

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud  
 Dripping their snow on the green grass, 10  
 Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,  
 Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little  
 Lady with rod that made them rise  
 From their noon apple-dreams, and scuttle 15  
 Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready;  
 In one house we are sternly stopped  
 To say we are vexed at her brown study,  
 Lying so primly propped. 20

1924

### Antique Harvesters<sup>2</sup>

(Scene: Of the Mississippi the bank sinister, and of the  
 Ohio the bank sinister)<sup>3</sup>

Tawny are the leaves turned, but they still hold.  
 It is the harvest; what shall this land produce?  
 A meager hill of kernels, a runnel of juice.  
 Declension looks from our land, it is old.  
 Therefore let us assemble, dry, gray, spare, 5  
 And mild as yellow air.

"I hear the creak of a raven's funeral wing."  
 The young men would be joying in the song  
 Of passionate birds; their memories are not long.  
 What is it thus rehearsed in sable? "Nothing." 10  
 Trust not but the old endure, and shall be older  
 Than the scornful beholder.

We pluck the spindling ears and gather the corn.  
 One spot has special yield? "On this spot stood  
 Heroes and drenched it with their only blood." 15

2. The title, suggesting a painting, calls attention to the stylized pictorial quality intended in the poem.

3. In Latin, *sinister* literally signifies "left" or "on the left hand." The left (sinister) bank of the Ohio was the

northern limit of slave soil at the time of the Civil War; and the crossing of the Ohio had long meant freedom for Negro slaves. Hence "sinister" here has double meaning.

And talk meets talk, as echoes from the horn  
Of the hunter—echoes are the old men's arts  
Ample are the chambers of their hearts.

Here come the hunters, keepers of a rite.  
The horn, the hounds, the lank mares coursing by 20  
Under quaint archetypes of chivalry;  
And the fox, lovely ritualist, in flight  
Offering his unearthly ghost to quarry;  
And the fields, themselves to harry.

Resume, harvesters. The treasure is full bronze 25  
Which you will garner for the Lady,<sup>4</sup> and the moon  
Could tinge it no yellower than does this noon;  
But the gray will quench it shortly—the fields, men, stones.  
Pluck fast, dreamers; prove as you rumble slowly  
Not less than men, not wholly. 30

Bare the arm too, dainty youths, bend the knees  
Under bronze burdens. And by an autumn tone  
As by a gray, as by a green, you will have known  
Your famous Lady's image; for so have these.  
And if one say that easily will your hands 35  
More prosper in other lands,

Angry as wasp-music be your cry then:  
"Forsake the Proud Lady, of the heart of fire,  
The look of snow, to the praise of a dwindled choir,  
Song of degenerate specters that were men? 40  
The sons of the fathers shall keep her, worthy of  
What these have done in love."

True, it is said of our Lady, she ageth.  
But see, if you peep shrewdly, she hath not stooped;  
Take no thought of her servitors that have drooped, 45  
For we are nothing; and if one talk of death—  
Why, the ribs of the earth subsist frail as a breath  
If but God wearieth.

1924

## The Equilibrists<sup>5</sup>

Full of her long white arms and milky skin  
He had a thousand times remembered sin.

4. The language of chivalry is here employed to refer to the old southland, personified as a woman in the last four stanzas of the poem.

5. Ordinarily the word signifies acrobats who perform feats of balancing. Here the lovers are attempting an equilibrium between two different ideals of

Alone in the press of people traveled he,  
Minding her jacinth, and myrrh, and ivory.

Mouth he remembered: the quaint orifice  
From which came heat that flamed upon the kiss,  
Till cold words came down spiral from the head,  
Grey doves from the officious tower illsped. 5

Body: it was a white field ready for love,  
On her body's field, with the gaunt tower above,  
The lilies grew, beseeching him to take,  
If he would pluck and wear them, bruise and break. 10

Eyes talking: Never mind the cruel words,  
Embrace my flowers, but not embrace the swords.  
But what they said, the doves came straightway flying  
And unsaid: Honor, Honor,<sup>6</sup> they came crying. 15

Importunate her doves. Too pure, too wise,  
Clambering on his shoulder, saying, Arise,  
Leave me now, and never let us meet,  
Eternal distance now command thy feet. 20

Predicament indeed, which thus discovers  
Honor among thieves, Honor between lovers.  
O such a little word is Honor, they feel!  
But the grey word is between them cold as steel.<sup>7</sup>

At length I saw these lovers fully were come  
Into their torture of equilibrium;  
Dreadfully had forsworn each other, and yet  
They were bound each to each, and they did not forget. 25

And rigid as two painful stars, and twirled  
About the clustered night their prison world,  
They burned with fierce love always to come near,  
But Honor beat them back and kept them clear. 30

Ah, the strict lovers, they are ruined now!  
I cried in anger. But with puddled brow  
Devising for those gibbeted and brave  
Came I descanting: Man, what would you have? 35

love. The poet in the first four stanzas utilizes a traditional language of passion (*cf.* the Song of Solomon i: 13-14; iv: 1-7). Succeeding stanzas employ the Christian idealization of chastity, drawing upon the Arthurian romances and Dante.

6. Here an idealized convention of chivalry defeats the passionate sym-

bols of the Song of Solomon.

7. In the medieval romances of chivalry it was a sword, not a "word," of "steel" that separated lovers. See, for example, the sword with its cruciform hilt that lay between Iseult and Tristram at night on their journey (*Le Roman de Tristan et Iseult*, edited by Joseph Bédier, ix, 105).

For spin your period out, and draw your breath,  
 A kinder saeculum<sup>8</sup> begins with Death.  
 Would you ascend to Heaven and bodiless dwell?  
 Or take your bodies honorless to Hell?

40

In Heaven you have heard no marriage is,<sup>9</sup>  
 No white flesh tinder to your lecheries,  
 Your male and female tissue sweetly shaped  
 Sublimed away, and furious blood escaped.

Great lovers lie in Hell, the stubborn ones  
 Infatuate of the flesh upon the bones;  
 Stuprate<sup>1</sup> they rend each other when they kiss,  
 The pieces kiss again, no end to this.

45

But still I watched them spinning, orbited nice.  
 Their flames were not more radiant than their ice.  
 I dug in the quiet earth and wrought the tomb  
 And made these lines to memorize their doom:—

50

### Epitaph

*Equilibrists lie here; stranger, tread light;  
 Close, but untouching in each other's sight;  
 Mouldered the lips and ashy the tall skull,  
 Let them lie perilous and beautiful.*

55

1927

8. Latin *saeculum* signifies a "cycle," "age," "period of time."

9. Cf. Matthew xxii: 30.

1. Adjective from the Latin *stuprare*, "to ravish." Cf. stanzas 7 and 8:

the entire effect suggests an *inverted* image of Paolo and Francesca, love-tormented but bodiless spirits (Dante, *Inferno* V).

## E. E. CUMMINGS

(1894—)

E. E. Cummings, whose first volume of poems, *Tulips and Chimneys*, appeared in 1923, has remained a controversial but always prominent poet. Those who disparage him are often vehement; his defenders sometimes have the sound of devotees. Meanwhile, Cummings has produced a large volume of quite individualistic lyrics and

has exercised a considerable influence.

Edward Estlin Cummings was born on October 14, 1894, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His father, then a member of the English department at Harvard, later served as pastor of the famous Old South Church in Boston, from 1905 to 1926. Cummings was graduated from

Harvard in 1915 and remained to take his M.A. in 1916. The next year, in advance of American participation in World War I, he enlisted in the Norton Harjes Ambulance Corps and was sent to France for active duty. A censor's mistake produced an uncomfortable comedy of errors which led to his spending three months in a French detention camp, charged with treasonable correspondence. This experience provided the material for *The Enormous Room* (1922), one of the memorable literary records of that war. Upon his release he at once volunteered for service in the United States Army, which had then entered the field. After the war, Cummings went to Paris for training in painting. To that art he has devoted himself professionally, first in Paris and later in New York, while publishing his volumes of poems at frequent intervals.

The experimental nature of Cummings' poems is evident first in their mechanics—in the reduction of capital letters to lower case, as even in the printing of his own name; in his purposeful underpunctuation; in the dissociation of phrases from the expected order or from the logical relationship. Actually, these mechanical disorientations are meaningful, and secure the participation of the reader in the movement of the poem. More essential to the art of Cummings is his use of the stream-of-consciousness technique—his development of methods suggested by the success of James Joyce and Ger-

trude Stein. He often uses words or phrases as symbolic objects, juxtaposing them in startling ways unrelated to their literal meanings but representing the simultaneous presence in the mind of just such meaningful but illogical associations. Finally, his subjects or intended effects often involve allegedly "forbidden" areas of the subconscious mind or human behavior; or the language of violent or vulgar experience; or the jargon of advertising journalism. Side by side with these waifs will appear the most exquisite medieval delicacy, a sublimation of passion in ideality or graceful fantasy.

Whatever may be one's judgment concerning the mechanics of Cummings' style, his poetry has several values generally admitted. In his love poems and poems of nature he has been able on occasion to convey an intense passion in forms of controlled beauty and propriety. He is a master of satire, and in this area he employs both delicate wit and the heavy club of irony and invective, as in his attacks on advertisers, Babbitts, and superpatriots. And in those of his poems not consciously raucous for satirical effect, he can unite great melodic power with verbal precision and clarity.

*Poems 1923-1954*, 1954, is a comprehensive collection; later volumes are *95 Poems*, 1958; *100 Selected Poems*, 1959; and *50 Poems*, 1960. Critical prose pieces are contained in *e. e. cummings: A Miscellany*, 1958, edited by George J. Firmage.

*The Magic Maker: E. E. Cummings*, 1958, is an authorized critical biography by Charles Norman.



O Thou to Whom the Musical White Spring

O Thou to whom the musical white spring

offers her lily inextinguishable,  
taught by thy tremulous grace bravely to fling

Implacable death's mysteriously sable  
robe from her redolent shoulders,

Thou from whose 5

feet incarnate song suddenly leaping  
flameflung, mounts, inimitably to lose  
herself where the wet stars softly are keeping

their exquisite dreams—O Love! upon thy dim  
shrine of intangible commemoration, 10  
(from whose faint close as some grave languorous hymn  
pledged to illimitable dissipation  
unhurried clouds of incense fleetly roll)  
i spill my bright incalculable soul.

1925

*If There Are Any Heavens*

if there are any heavens my mother will(all by herself)have  
one. It will not be a pansy heaven nor  
a fragile heaven of lilies-of-the-valley but  
it will be a heaven of blackred roses

my father will be(deep like a rose  
tall like a rose) 5

standing near my

(swaying over her  
silent)

with eyes which are really petals and see 10

nothing with the face of a poet really which  
is a flower and not a face with  
hands

which whisper

This is my beloved my 15

(suddenly in sunlight

he will bow,

& the whole garden will bow)

1931

## Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
 (with up so floating many bells down)  
 spring summer autumn winter  
 he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men(both little and small) 5  
 cared for anyone not at all  
 they sowed their isn't they reaped their same  
 sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few  
 and down they forgot as up they grew 10  
 autumn winter spring summer)  
 that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
 she laughed his joy she cried his grief  
 bird by snow and stir by still 15  
 anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
 laughed their cryings and did their dance  
 (sleep wake hope and then)they  
 said their nevers they slept their dream 20

stars rain sun moon  
 (and only the snow can begin to explain  
 how children are apt to forget to remember  
 with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess 25  
 (and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
 busy folk buried them side by side  
 little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
 and more by more they dream their sleep 30  
 noone and anyone earth by april  
 wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)  
 summer autumn winter spring  
 reaped their sowing and went their came 35  
 sun moon stars rain

## ALLEN TATE

(1899-)

Allen Tate was born in Clark County, Kentucky. As a student at Vanderbilt University he worked under John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson and helped to found a periodical, *The Fugitive*. Upon graduation in 1922 he went to New York.

In 1928 Tate published *Mr. Pope and Other Poems* and *Stonewall Jackson: The Good Soldier*, and, in 1929, *Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall*. These studies deepened an interest in the Confederate South and led to his participation in the Agrarian symposium *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). *Poems: 1928-1931* appeared in 1932.

Tate began teaching in 1934, at Southwestern University in Memphis. He has taught at various institutions since, notably Princeton, New York University, and the University of Minnesota, where he is now professor of English. From 1944 to 1946 he edited the *Sewanee Review*.

Tate's critical writings reveal his preoccupation with poetry and the difficulties confronting the serious poet today. Many of those difficulties are traceable, he believes, to "progressive" education, which "is rapidly making us a nation of illiterates"; he also indicts tabloids, movies, picture magazines, radio, and television. To state the issue differently: "It is very hard for people to apply their minds to poetry, since it is one of our assumptions \* \* \* that our intellects are for mathematics and science, our emotions for poetry." But

poetry gives us knowledge fully as valid as that which science affords, although of a different order.

Tate therefore makes few concessions to popular taste in his own poetry, which is, as Cleanth Brooks has remarked, "a continual test of the imagination." He admires poetry that, in his own words, "requires of the reader the fullest cooperation of all his intellectual resources, all his knowledge of the world, and all the persistence and alertness that he now thinks of giving only to scientific studies." He admires "form, coherence of image and metaphor, control of tone and of rhythm, the union of these features." His work as a whole has exercised an astringent influence upon his contemporaries.

Tate's recurrent themes are the South, religion, and the problem of the frustrated individual preoccupied with and tortured by his own sensibility. The southern poems alternate between satire, directed against certain groups or types among his contemporaries, and completely objective presentations of subject matter. The poems concerned with religion reflect the difficulty involved in accepting the Christian faith, which Tate himself, incidentally, has recently embraced by joining the Roman Catholic Church.

Individual volumes not mentioned above include *Three Poems*, 1930; *The Mediterranean and Other Poems*, 1936; *Selected Poems*, 1937; *Reason in Madness*, 1941; *The Vigil of Venus*, 1943; *The Winter Sea*, 1944; *Poems*, 1922-

1947, 1948; and *Two Conceits for the Eye to Sing, If Possible*, 1950. *The Fathers*, 1938, is a novel. Volumes of essays include *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas*, 1936; *On the Limits*

*of Poetry*, 1948; *The Forlorn Demon*, 1953; *The Man of Letters in the Modern World* \* \* \*, 1955; and *Collected Essays*, 1959.

## Ode to the Confederate Dead<sup>1</sup>

Row after row with strict impunity  
 The headstones yield their names to the element,  
 The wind whirrs without recollection;<sup>2</sup>  
 In the riven troughs the splayed leaves  
 Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament 5  
 To the seasonal eternity of death,  
 Then driven by the fierce scrutiny  
 Of heaven to their business in the vast breath,  
 They sough the rumor of mortality.

Autumn is desolation in the plot 10  
 Of a thousand acres, where these memories grow  
 From the inexhaustible bodies that are not  
 Dead, but feed the grass row after rich row.  
 Remember now the autumns that have gone!—  
 Ambitious November with the humors of the year, 15  
 With a particular zeal for every slab,  
 Staining the uncomfortable angels that rot  
 On the slabs, a wing chipped here, an arm there:  
 The brute curiosity of an angel's stare  
 Turns you, like them, to stone, 20  
 Transforms the heaving air  
 Till plunged to a heavier world below  
 You shift your sea-space blindly  
 Heaving, turning like the blind crab.<sup>3</sup>

Dazed by the wind, only the wind 25  
 The leaves flying, plunge

1. "Ode to the Confederate Dead" is Tate's best-known poem. The author has supplied his readers with an exegesis of it in the essay "Narcissus as Narcissus" (*Virginia Quarterly Review*, xiv, Winter, 1938, pp. 113ff.) in which he writes that it "is 'about' solipsism [a philosophical doctrine which says that we create the world in the act of perceiving it] or Narcissism, or any other *ism* that denotes the failure of the human personality to function properly in nature and society." The poem concerns the reverie of one at the gate of a Confederate cemetery, providing an elaborate contrast between the heroic age, symbolized by the buried soldiers,

and the frustrate condition of a typical modern, who can visualize himself only in terms of such symbols as are indicated by the notes to the poem, below. The poet has frequently altered this poem. The present text represents the last revision, in *Poems* \* \* \* (1948).

2. Ll. 1-3 introduce what the poet has called persistent themes in this poem: the "locked-in ego" and courage, suggested by the names on the stones; and social heroism, recalled by the communal burial in mother earth.

3. One of the poet's two images for the ego. The other, a contrasting symbol, is the "jaguar" of l. 80.

You know who have waited by the wall<sup>4</sup>  
 The twilit certainty of an animal,  
 Those midnight restitutions of the blood  
 You know—the immitigable pines, the smoky frieze 30  
 Of the sky, the sudden call: you know the rage,  
 The cold pool left by the mounting flood,  
 Of muted Zeno and Parmenides.<sup>5</sup>  
 You who have waited for the angry resolution  
 Of those desires that should be yours tomorrow, 35  
 You know the unimportant shrift of death  
 And praise the vision  
 And praise the arrogant circumstance  
 Of those who fall  
 Rank upon rank, hurried beyond decision— 40  
 Here by the sagging gate, stopped by the wall.

Seeing, seeing only the leaves  
 Flying, plunge and expire

Turn your eyes to the immoderate past  
 Turn to the inscrutable infantry rising 45  
 Demons out of the earth—they will not last.  
 Stonewall, Stonewall,<sup>6</sup> and the sunken fields of hemp,  
 Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run.  
 Lost in that orient of the thick and fast  
 You will curse the setting sun. 50

Cursing only the leaves crying  
 Like an old man in a storm

You hear the shout—the crazy hemlocks point  
 With troubled fingers to the silence which  
 Smothers you, a mummy, in time.

The hound bitch 55  
 Toothless and dying, in a musty cellar  
 Hears the wind only.

Now that the salt of their blood  
 Stiffens the saltier oblivion of the sea,  
 Seals the malignant purity of the flood,  
 What shall we, who count our days and bow 60

4. The passage beginning here, as the poet explains, introduces his second theme—that of “heroism \* \* \* in an entire society”; which in the southern cause produced “a formal ebullience of the human spirit” into chivalry (*cf.* ll. 44–48, and l. 71).

5. Zeno and Parmenides were Greek philosophers of the fifth century B.C.

They were both of the Eleatic school, which developed the conception of the universal unity of being.

6. “Stonewall,” the popular name of Confederate General Thomas Jonathan Jackson, is figuratively associated with the stone wall (*e.g.*, l. 27), and in l. 48 is connected with battles particularly memorable for the southerners.

Our heads with a commemorial woe,  
 In the ribboned coats of grim felicity,  
 What shall we say of the bones, unclean,  
 Their verdurous anonymity will grow?  
 The ragged arms, the ragged heads and eyes 65  
 Lost in these acres of the insane green?  
 The gray lean spiders come, they come and go;  
 In a tangle of willows without light  
 The singular screech-owl's bright  
 Invisible lyric seeds the mind 70  
 With the furious murmur of their chivalry.

We shall say only, the leaves  
 Flying, plunge and expire

We shall say only, the leaves whispering  
 In the improbable mist of nightfall 75  
 That flies on multiple wing;  
 Night is the beginning and the end,  
 And in between the ends of distraction  
 Waits mute speculation, the patient curse  
 That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar<sup>7</sup> leaps 80  
 For his own image in a jungle pool, his victim.

What shall we say who have knowledge  
 Carried to the heart? Shall we take the act  
 To the grave? Shall we, more hopeful, set up the grave  
 In the house? The ravenous grave?

Leave now 85

The shut gate and the decomposing wall:  
 The gentle serpent, green in the mulberry bush,  
 Riots with his tongue through the hush—  
 Sentinel of the grave who counts us all!

1926-1936

1928, 1948

## Mr. Pope

When Alexander Pope<sup>8</sup> strolled in the city  
 Strict was the glint of pearl and gold sedans.  
 Ladies leaned out, more out of fear than pity;  
 For Pope's tight back<sup>9</sup> was rather a goat's than man's.

One often thinks the urn should have more bones 5  
 Than skeletons provide for speedy dust;

7. The "jaguar" and the "blind crab" (l. 24) are, the poet says, the "two explicit symbols for the locked-in ego," which, in this poem, is contrasted with

social heroism.

8. Alexander Pope (1688-1744), British neoclassical poet.

9. Pope was a hunchback.

The urn gets hollow, cobwebs brittle as stones  
Weave to the funeral shell a frivolous rust.

And he who dribbled couplets like the snake<sup>1</sup>  
Coiled to a lithe precision in the sun, 10  
Is missing. The jar is empty; you may break  
It only to find that Mr. Pope is gone.

What requisitions of a verity  
Prompted the wit and rage between his teeth  
One cannot say. Around a crooked tree 15  
A mortal climbs whose name should be a wreath.

1928, 1948

## Death of Little Boys

When little boys grow patient at last, weary,  
Surrender their eyes immeasurably to the night,  
The event will rage terrific as the sea;  
Their bodies fill a crumbling room with light.

Then you will touch at the bedside, torn in two, 5  
Gold curls now deftly intricate with gray  
As the windowpane extends a fear to you  
From one peeled aster drenched with the wind all day.

And over his chest the covers, in an ultimate dream,  
Will mount to the teeth, ascend the eyes, press back 10  
The locks—while round his sturdy belly gleam  
The suspended breaths, white spars above the wreck:

'Till all the guests, come in to look, turn down  
'Their palms; and delirium assails the cliff  
Of Norway where 'you ponder, and your little town 15  
Reels like a sailor drunk in his rotten skiff. . . .

The bleak sunshine shrieks its chipped music then  
Out to the milkweed amid the fields of wheat.  
There is a calm for you where men and women  
Unroll the chill precision of moving feet. 20

1928

1. Cf. Pope's satirical comment on his clumsy imitators (*Essay on Criticism*, ll. 356-357): "A *needless Alexandrine*

ends the Song, / That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow Length along."

## MARIANNE MOORE

(1887-)

Miss Moore's earliest poems appeared in 1915, but she did not win general attention until the *Selected Poems* appeared in 1935. Eliot then wrote that these are "part of the body of durable poems written in our time." Her most disciplined poems have been compared with those of the metaphysical poets; in them the simple initial idea has been extended by metaphoric devices to new dimensions of wit, expressed in a language severe and pure. Its alleged obscurity will not appear to the reader who can bring to it the willing correspondence of intellect and imagination. If satiric, it is dedicatedly humane, corresponding with her generali-

zation that "poetry watches life with affection." Marianne Moore was born in 1887 near St. Louis, was graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1909, taught at the Carlisle Indian School (1911-1915) and became a librarian in the New York Public Library while serving as editor of the *Dial* (1924-1930).

Miss Moore has published *Poems*, 1921; *Marriage*, 1923; *The Pangolin and Other Verse*, 1936; *What Are Years*, 1941; *Nevertheless*, 1944; *A Face*, 1949; *Like a Bulwark*, 1956; and *O To Be a Dragon*, 1959. A selection of her critical articles appeared as *Predilections*, 1955. *The Fables of La Fontaine*, 1954, and *Selected Fables*, 1955, are translations. The most comprehensive single volume is *Collected Poems*, 1951.

An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish<sup>5</sup>

Here we have thirst  
And patience, from the first,  
And art, as in a wave held up for us to see  
In its essential perpendicularity;  
Not brittle but  
Intense—the spectrum, that  
Spectacular and nimble animal the fish,  
Whose scales turn aside the sun's sword with their polish.

1924, 1951

No Swan So Fine<sup>6</sup>

"No water so still as the  
dead fountains of Versailles."<sup>7</sup> No swan,

5. First published in *Observations* (1924). The association of several related impressions with a single, sharp image suggests the author's early command of the techniques of the imagist poets.

6. First published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* for October, 1932, and first collected in *Selected Poems* (1935), this poem was retained in the *Collected Poems* (1951).

7. The author's note states that the



with swart blind look askance  
and gondoliering legs,<sup>8</sup> so fine  
as the chintz china one with fawn- 5  
brown eyes and toothed gold  
collar on to show whose bird it was.<sup>9</sup>

Lodged in the Louis Fifteenth  
candelabrum-tree<sup>1</sup> of cockscomb-  
tinted buttons, dahlias, 10  
sea-urchins, and everlastings,  
it perches on the branching foam  
of polished sculptured  
flowers—at ease and tall. The king is dead.

1932, 1951

## The Frigate Pelican<sup>2</sup>

Rapidly cruising or lying on the air<sup>3</sup> there is a bird  
that realizes Rasselas's friend's project  
of wings uniting levity with strength.<sup>4</sup> This  
hell-diver, frigate-bird, hurricane-  
bird; unless swift is the proper word 5  
for him, the storm omen when  
he flies close to the waves, should be seen  
fishing, although oftener  
he appears to prefer

to take, on the wing, from industrious crude-winged 10  
species  
the fish they have caught, and is seldom successful.  
A marvel of grace, no matter how fast his  
victim may fly or how often may  
turn. The others with similar ease, 15  
slowly rising once more,

source of this striking figure is an unnamed article by Percy Phillips in the *New York Times Magazine*, May 10, 1931. The live swans that used to adorn these "dead fountains" mediate between the dead fountains and the china swan.  
8. The Italian gondolier propels his craft by paddling from the stern.  
9. "A pair of Louis XV candelabra with Dresden figures of swans belonging to Lord Balfour" [Miss Moore's note]. In the sophisticated period of Louis' reign the swan's collar might actually have shown armorial identification.

1. The age of Louis XV, king of France from 1715 to 1774, was noted for opulent and luxurious art such as the rococo style here depicted, which in

spite of profuse ornament sometimes achieved delicacy.

2. First published in the *Criterion* for July, 1934; retained in *Selected Poems* (1935) and *Collected Poems* (1951).

3. The author's note acknowledges the influence of Audubon's portrayal of "*Fregata aquila*, the Frigate Pelican."

4. In Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759), Chapter 6, a friend of Rasselas, "the artist," an inventor dedicated to the good of mankind, has contrived human wings (described in the quoted words) but will not share their secret with others lest evil rulers use them to war upon innocent people; cf. "hell-diver" as applied to this pelican.

move out to the top  
of the circle and stop

and blow back, allowing the wind to reverse their direction—

20

Unlike the more stalwart swan that can ferry the  
woodcutter's two children home. Make hay; keep  
the shop; I have one sheep; were a less  
limber animal's mottoes. This one

finds sticks for the swan's-down-dress  
of his child to rest upon and would  
not know Gretel from Hänsel.<sup>5</sup>

25

As impassioned Handel<sup>6</sup>—

meant for a lawyer and a masculine German domestic  
career—clandestinely studied the harpsichord  
and never was known to have fallen in love,  
the unconfiding frigate-bird hides

30

in the height and in the majestic  
display of his art. He glides

a hundred feet or quivers about  
as charred paper behaves—full  
of feints; and an eagle

35

of vigilance. . . . *Festina lente*.<sup>7</sup> Be gay  
civilly? How so? "If I do well I am blessed  
whether any bless me or not, and if I do  
ill I am cursed."<sup>8</sup> We watch the moon rise

40

on the Susquehanna.<sup>9</sup> In his way,  
this most romantic bird flies

to a more mundane place, the mangrove  
swamp to sleep. He wastes the moon.

45

But he, and others, soon

risc from the bough and though flying, are able to foil  
the tired

moment of danger that lays on heart and lungs the  
weight of the python that crushes to powder.

50

1934, 1951

5. The allusion is, of course, to the folk story of Hänsel and Gretel in Grimms' *Tales*. Cf. the "two children" in ll. 21–22 above (the father of Hänsel and Gretel was a woodcutter).

6. Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759), the most noted composer in England of his time. He was born and educated in Germany, and for a number of years his father opposed his entry upon a musical career. A prolific composer of

operas, chamber music, and religious oratorios (the *Messiah* remains well known), he became a British subject and theatrical director after 1726.

7. This Latin maxim is translated, "make haste slowly."

8. "Hindoo saying" [Miss Moore's note].

9. The author's girlhood home, Carlisle, Pa., lies just west of Harrisburg and the Susquehanna River.



# Fiction as Social History

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JOHN DOS PASSOS

(1896-)

Many writers have depended upon social history as a frame for their narratives; but John Dos Passos, in the three novels of *U.S.A.*, invented a new form, in which social history itself became the dynamic drive and motivation of a cycle of novels. His real protagonist in these volumes is American life from just before the first World War until the period of the great depression in the early thirties. His writing since the completion of the trilogy in 1936 has not continued on the same level of imagination and excellence, but the four chief works of that earlier period are sufficient to establish him as one of the most important of our recent writers.

John Dos Passos was born in Chicago on January 14, 1896. After preparation at private school, he entered Harvard, and he graduated with distinction in 1916. He had already begun to write, and like many privileged young idealists of his generation, he was persuaded that the machine age somehow necessarily debased and enslaved mankind. From this position to proletarian sympathies and a

Marxist philosophy was but a short and natural step for the intellectuals of his period.

However, in 1916 Dos Passos went to Spain, intending to study architecture in Europe. The growing seriousness of the war changed his plans. He served first with a French ambulance unit, then with the Red Cross in Italy, and finally as a private in the medical corps of the United States Army. He then entered journalism, and spent several years as a foreign correspondent. His social idealism and his disillusion are reflected in his two war-inspired novels, *One Man's Initiation*—1917 (1920) and *Three Soldiers* (1921). The latter may still rank as a fine book, although as a war novel it suffers by comparison with Hemingway's.

Three volumes of no permanent importance, one a novel, intervened before Dos Passos emerged as a writer of unique originality and force in *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). Here for the first time he employed kaleidoscopic organization—the chronological narrative is abandoned in favor of shifting scenes

and episodes, at first apparently not connected, in which, however, the reappearance of certain characters in various associations produces a cross-sectional view of New York life.

An interval of playwriting followed, during which he planned and prepared materials for his trilogy, *U.S.A.* The first volume, *The 42nd Parallel*, appeared in 1930. This was followed by 1919 (1932) and *The Big Money* (1936). Each novel is an entity, but the three are unified by continuity of social motivation and fictional characters. The kaleidoscopic technique is retained from *Manhattan Transfer*, but the social scene is broadened. Side by side with the narrative concerning the fictional characters are the profiles or brief biographies of American leaders at every level, ranging from Ford and Morgan to Debs and to Valentino. The "newsreels" provide the setting—headlines, songs, and snatches from news articles, slogans, and advertisements are juxtaposed to define the social atmosphere at a given time. The "camera eye" represents the author's stream of consciousness at the time of the action of his story.

As various forms of collectivist dictatorship bred their inevitable human tragedy in the period of World War II, the various topical volumes and essays of Dos Passos took a sharp turn to the right. *The Ground We Stand On* (1941) is a collection of essays on American leaders of the past, starting in colonial times, with emphasis on democratic individualists like Roger Williams, Jefferson, and Frank-

lin, who stood for freedom of conscience, civil rights, and economic liberty. His reawakened admiration for Jefferson resulted in the study *The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson* (1953).

Dos Passos still wrestles with the American problem of big-business, but is no more apprehensive of "big capital" than of "big labor." His later novels, reflecting his changes in viewpoint, have been good, but not really comparable in either power or originality with his earlier work, even though they are more judicious. They are *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939); *Number One* (1943), the portrait of an American demagogue and a satirical inquiry into the offenses of political demagoguery against the people; *The Grand Design* (1948), on the "New Deal" years of Franklin Roosevelt's administration; and *Most Likely to Succeed* (1954), a study of Communist "intellectuals." *Adventures of a Young Man*, *Number One*, and *The Grand Design* were collected as a trilogy entitled *District of Columbia* (1953). Few experimental techniques appear in these novels or in *The Great Days* (1958), but *Midcentury* (1961) marks a return to the methods of *U.S.A.*

*U.S.A.* was first published under one cover in 1938. Other fiction is *Streets of Night*, 1923; and *Orient Express*, 1927. His early poems were collected in *A Pushcart at the Curb*, 1922. *Rosinante to the Road Again*, 1922, is a group of early travel essays on Spanish art and culture; later essays on his travels and observations, good journalistic reporting, are collected in *In All Countries*, 1934; *Journeys Between Wars*, 1938; *State of the Nation*, 1944; *Tour of Duty*, 1946, reporting

his observations on World War II.

The first full-length study is Georges-Albert Astre, *Thèmes et structures dans l'œuvre de John Dos Passos*, Paris, 1956. Two very able short studies are the chapters on Dos Passos in

Joseph Warren Beach, *American Fiction, 1920-1940*, 1941; and in Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*, 1942.

## From U.S.A.<sup>1</sup>

### From The 42nd Parallel

#### Proteus<sup>4</sup>

Steinmetz was a hunchback,  
son of a hunchback lithographer.

He was born in Breslau in eighteen sixtyfive, graduated with highest honors at seventeen from the Breslau Gymnasium,<sup>5</sup> went to the University of Breslau to study mathematics;

mathematics to Steinmetz was muscular strength and long walks over the hills and the kiss of a girl in love and big evenings spent swilling beer with your friends;

on his broken back he felt the topheavy weight of society the way workingmen felt it on their straight backs, the way poor students felt it, was a member of a socialist club, editor of a paper called *The People's Voice*.

Bismarck<sup>6</sup> was sitting in Berlin like a big paperweight to keep the new Germany feudal, to hold down the empire for his bosses the Hohenzollerns.

1. The selections from Dos Passos given here, all from *U.S.A.* (1938), were sufficiently independent in construction to win separate prepublication in various periodicals; each one illustrates a characteristic technical experiment of this novelist; and collectively considered they span the period of social history represented in the three novels, while developing, in continuous sequence, a major theme in the motivation of the trilogy. In this study of American industrial civilization, ending with the depression of the early thirties, the author stresses, on the one hand, the consolidation of large capital enterprise, the development of inventive genius, the scientific advances, and the increases in technological efficiency and in labor controls; in strong contrast, he also reveals the worker—his lack of security, his rootlessness—the organized opposition to the labor movement and the attacks on it as “radicalism,” and the inroads of war and depression on common people. Prepublication of these sketches occurred as follows: “Proteus” (from *The 42nd Parallel*, 1930) and “The House of Morgan” (from 1919, 1932) were among the pieces that the

author contributed to the *New Masses* during the period 1930-1932. Of the selections from *The Big Money* (1936), “Newsreel LXVI” and “The Camera Eye (50)” were printed together in *Common Sense* for February, 1936; and “Vag” appeared in the *New Republic* for July 22, 1936.

4. Karl August Rudolf Steinmetz (1865-1923), German-born electrical engineer and inventor, left Germany, as described in this selection, a socialist fugitive. Then twenty-three, he changed his given names to “Charles Proteus.” The Proteus of Greek legend was a prophetic old man of the sea, able to alter his shape to escape persecutors who wished to compel him to prophesy. The protean quality is recalled in Dos Passos’ sketch.

5. In Germany, a type of secondary school preparing students for the university.

6. Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck (1815-1898), “the Iron Chancellor,” had during the youth of Steinmetz been unifying Germany by his policy of “blood and iron.” The Hohenzollerns (below) were the reigning royal family during this period.

Steinmetz had to run off to Zurich for fear of going to jail; at Zurich his mathematics woke up all the professors at the Polytechnic;

but Europe in the eighties was no place for a penniless German student with a broken back and a big head filled with symbolic calculus and wonder about electricity that is mathematics made power

and a socialist at that.

With a Danish friend he sailed for America steerage on an old French line boat *La Champagne*,

lived in Brooklyn at first and commuted to Yonkers where he had a twelvedollar a week job with Rudolph Eichemeyer<sup>7</sup> who was a German exile from fortyeight an inventor and electrician and owner of a factory where he made hatmaking machinery and electrical generators.

In Yonkers he<sup>8</sup> worked out the theory of the Third Harmonics and the law of hysteresis which states in a formula the hundred-fold relations between the metallic heat, density, frequency when the poles change places in the core of a magnet under an alternating current.

It is Steinmetz's law of hysteresis that makes possible all the transformers that crouch in little boxes and gableroofed houses in all the hightension lines all over everywhere. The mathematical symbols of Steinmetz's law are the patterns of all transformers everywhere.

In eighteen ninetytwo when Eichemeyer sold out to the corporation that was to form General Electric, Steinmetz was entered in the contract along with other valuable apparatus. All his life Steinmetz was a piece of apparatus belonging to General Electric.

First his laboratory was at Lynn, then it was moved and the little hunchback with it to Schenectady, the electric city.

General Electric humored him, let him be a socialist, let him keep a greenhouseful of cactuses lit up by mercury lights, let him have alligators, talking crows and a gila monster for pets and the publicity department talked up the wizard, the medicine man who knew the symbols that opened up the doors of Ali Baba's cave.<sup>9</sup>

Steinmetz jotted a formula on his cuff and next morning a thousand new powerplants had sprung up and the dynamos sang dollars and the silence of the transformers was all dollars,

7. Rudolf Eickemeyer (1831-1895), who came to the United States from Bavaria in 1850, by his 150 inventions fostered basic improvements in many industrial fields.

8. I.e., Steinmetz.

9. In the *Arabian Nights*, Ali Baba was a woodcutter who learned the magic password, *sesame*, that opened the doors to the cave containing the treasure of the Forty Thieves.

and the publicity department poured oily stories into the ears of the American public every Sunday and Steinmetz became the little parlor magician,

who made a toy thunderstorm in his laboratory and made all the toy trains run on time and the meat stay cold in the icebox and the lamp in the parlor and the great lighthouses and the searchlights and the revolving beams of light that guide airplanes at night towards Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Los Angeles,

and they let him be a socialist and believe that human society could be improved the way you can improve a dynamo and they let him be pro-German and write a letter offering his services to Lenin because mathematicians are so impractical who make up formulas by which you can build powerplants, factories, subway systems, light, heat, air, sunshine but not human relations that affect the stockholders' money and the directors' salaries.

Steinmetz was a famous magician and he talked to Edison tapping with the Morse code on Edison's knee

because Edison was so very deaf

and he went out West

to make speeches that nobody understood

and he talked to Bryan about God on a railroad train

and all the reporters stood round while he and Einstein

met face to face,

but they couldn't catch what they said

and Steinmetz was the most valuable piece of apparatus General Electric had

until he wore out and died.

1930

## From 1919

### *The House of Morgan*

*I commit my soul into the hands of my savior, wrote John Pierpont Morgan in his will, in full confidence that having redeemed it and washed it in His most precious blood, He will present it faultless before my heavenly father, and I intreat my children to maintain and defend at all hazard and at any cost of personal sacrifice the blessed doctrine of complete atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ once offered and through that alone,*

and into the hands of the House of Morgan represented by his son,

he committed,

when he died in Rome in 1913.

the control of the Morgan interests in New York, Paris and London, four national banks, three trust companies, three life insurance companies, ten railroad systems, three street railway companies, an express company, the International Mercantile Marine,

power,

on the cantilever principle, through interlocking directorates over eighteen other railroads, U.S. Steel, General Electric, American Tel and Tel, five major industries;

the interwoven cables of the Morgan Stillman Baker combination held credit up like a suspension bridge, thirteen percent of the banking resources of the world.

The first Morgan to make a pool was Joseph Morgan, a hotel-keeper in Hartford Connecticut who organized stagecoach lines and bought up Aetna Life Insurance stock in a time of panic caused by one of the big New York fires in the 1830's;

his son Junius followed in his footsteps, first in the drygoods business, and then as a partner to George Peabody, a Massachusetts banker who built up an enormous underwriting and mercantile business in London and became a friend of Queen Victoria;

Junius married the daughter of John Pierpont, a Boston preacher, poet, eccentric, and abolitionist; and their eldest son,

John Pierpont Morgan

arrived in New York to make his fortune

after being trained in England, going to school at Vevey, proving himself a crack mathematician at the University of Göttingen,

a lanky morose young man of twenty,

just in time for the panic of '57.

(war and panics on the stock exchange, bankruptcies, warloans, good growing weather for the House of Morgan.)

When the guns started booming at Fort Sumter,<sup>1</sup> young Morgan turned some money over reselling condemned muskets to the U.S. army and began to make himself felt in the gold room in downtown New York; there was more in trading in gold than in trading in muskets; so much for the Civil War.

During the Franco-Prussian war<sup>2</sup> Junius Morgan floated a huge bond issue for the French government at Tours.

At the same time young Morgan was fighting Jay Cooke and the German-Jew bankers in Frankfort over the funding of the American war debt (he never did like the Germans or the Jews).

The panic of '75 ruined Jay Cooke<sup>3</sup> and made J. Pierpont Morgan

1. The first military engagement of the Civil War (April 8, 1861).

2. In 1870-1871; a war promoted by Bismarck in his plan to unify the German states while crushing the regime of Emperor Napoleon III of

France.

3. Jay Cooke (1821-1905) built his huge financial enterprises on his position as financial agent for the United States Treasury under his friend Salmon P. Chase during the Civil War. "The



the boss croupier of Wall Street; he united with the Philadelphia Drexels and built the Drexel building where for thirty years he sat in his glassed-in office, redfaced and insolent, writing at his desk, smoking great black cigars, or, if important issues were involved, playing solitaire in his inner office; he was famous for his few words, Yes or No, and for his way of suddenly blowing up in a visitor's face and for that special gesture of the arm that meant, *What do I get out of it?*

In '77 Junius Morgan retired; J. Pierpont got himself made a member of the board of directors of the New York Central railroad and launched the first *Corsair*. He liked yachting and to have pretty actresses call him Commodore.

He founded the Lying-in Hospital on Stuyvesant Square, and was fond of going into St. George's church and singing a hymn all alone in the afternoon quiet.

In the panic of '93

at no inconsiderable profit to himself

Morgan saved the U.S. Treasury; gold was draining out, the country was ruined, the farmers were howling for a silver standard, Grover Cleveland and his cabinet were walking up and down in the blue room at the White House without being able to come to a decision, in Congress they were making speeches while the gold reserves melted in the Subtreasuries; poor people were starving; Coxey's army<sup>4</sup> was marching to Washington; for a long time Grover Cleveland couldn't bring himself to call in the representative of the Wall Street moneymasters; Morgan sat in his suite at the Arlington smoking cigars and quietly playing solitaire until at last the president sent for him;

he had a plan all ready for stopping the gold hemorrhage.

After that what Morgan said went; when Carnegie sold out he built the Steel Trust.

J. Pierpont Morgan was a bullnecked irascible man with small black magpie's eyes and a growth on his nose; he let his partners work themselves to death over the detailed routine of banking, and sat in his back office smoking black cigars; when there was something to be decided he said Yes or No or just turned his back and went back to his solitaire.

Every Christmas his librarian read him Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* from the original manuscript.

He was fond of canarybirds and pekinese dogs and liked to take pretty actresses yachting. Each *Corsair* was a finer vessel than the

panic of '75" actually began in 1873, with Cooke's failure through over-expansion.

4. Jacob Sechler Coxey, Pennsylvania businessman, in 1894 (and again in

1914) led an "army" of unemployed to Washington in support of his proposal for federal make-work projects to relieve unemployment in times of depression.

last.

When he dined with King Edward he sat at His Majesty's right; he ate with the Kaiser tête-à-tête; he liked talking to cardinals or the pope, and never missed a conference of Episcopal bishops;

Rome was his favorite city.

He liked choice cookery and old wines and pretty women and yachting, and going over his collections, now and then picking up a jewelled snuffbox and staring at it with his magpie's eyes.

He made a collection of the autographs of the rulers of France, owned glass cases full of Babylonian tablets, seals, signets, statuettes, busts,

Gallo-Roman bronzes,

Merovingian jewels, miniatures, watches, tapestries, porcelains, cuneiform inscriptions, paintings by all the old masters, Dutch, Italian, Flemish, Spanish,

manuscripts of the gospels and the Apocalypse,

a collection of the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,

and the letters of Pliny the Younger.

His collectors bought anything that was expensive or rare or had the glint of empire on it, and he had it brought to him and stared hard at it with his magpie's eyes. Then it was put in a glass case.

The last year of his life he went up the Nile on a dahabiyeh<sup>5</sup> and spent a long time staring at the great columns of the Temple of Karnak.

The panic of 1907 and the death of Harriman, his great opponent in railroad financing, in 1909, had left him the undisputed ruler of Wall Street, most powerful private citizen in the world;

an old man tired of the purple, suffering from gout, he had deigned to go to Washington to answer the questions of the Pujo Committee during the Money Trust Investigation:<sup>6</sup> Yes, I did what seemed to me to be for the best interests of the country.

So admirably was his empire built that his death in 1913 hardly caused a ripple in the exchanges of the world: the purple descended to his son, J. P. Morgan,

who had been trained at Groton and Harvard and by associating with the British ruling class

to be a more constitutional monarch: *J. P. Morgan suggests . . .*

By 1917 the Allies had borrowed one billion, nine hundred million dollars through the House of Morgan: we went overseas for democracy and the flag;

5. A long, low houseboat, propelled by sail, used only on the Nile River.

6. The "Money Trust" was an alleged concentration of credit in the hands of a few financiers, supposedly responsible

for such panics as that of 1907. Representative A. P. Pujo headed the House committee to investigate the matter in 1912.

and by the end of the Peace Conference the phrase *J. P. Morgan suggests* had compulsion over a power of seventyfour billion dollars.

J. P. Morgan is a silent man, not given to public utterances, but during the great steel strike, he wrote Gary:<sup>7</sup> *Heartfelt congratulations on your stand for the open shop, with which I am, as you know, absolutely in accord. I believe American principles of liberty are deeply involved, and must win if we stand firm.*

(Wars and panics on the stock exchange,  
machinegunfire and arson,  
bankruptcies, warloans,  
starvation, lice, cholera and typhus:  
good growing weather for the House of Morgan.)

1932

## From 'The Big Money

Newsreel LXVI

HOLMES DENIES STAY

*A better world's in birth<sup>1</sup>*

Tiny Wasps Imported From Korea In Battle To Death With  
Asiatic beetle

BOY CARRIED MILE DOWN SEWER; SHOT OUT ALIVE

CHICAGO BARS MEETINGS

*For justice thunders condemnation*

Washington Keeps Eye On Radicals

*Arise rejected of the earth*

PARIS BRUSSELS MOSCOW GENEVA ADD THEIR VOICES

*It is the final conflict*

*Let each stand in his place*

Geologist Lost In Cave Six Days

*The International Party*

SACCO AND VANZETTI MUST DIE<sup>2</sup>

*Shall be the human race.*

7. Elbert H. Gary (1846-1927), an associate of Morgan, and the steel magnate who built Gary, Indiana, as a "company town," was an archfoe of labor. The strike here mentioned occurred in the fall of 1919, and resulted from Gary's stern resistance to the closed shop.

1. The centered lines of italics in this "newsreel" are verses from "The Internationale," a Communist song.

2. The crux of this "newsreel" and of the following "camera eye" is the case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, convicted of murder in 1921 in connection with a payroll robbery in

*Much I thought of you when I was lying in the death house—the singing, the kind tender voices of the children from the playground where there was all the life and the joy of liberty—just one step from the wall that contains the buried agony of three buried souls. It would remind me so often of you and of your sister and I wish I could see you every moment, but I feel better that you will not come to the death house so that you could not see the horrible picture of three living in agony waiting to be electrocuted.*<sup>3</sup>

1936

### *The Camera Eye (50)*

they have clubbed us off the streets they are stronger they are rich they hire and fire the politicians the newspapereditors the old judges the small men with reputations the collegepresidents the wardheelers (listen businessmen collegepresidents judges America will not forget her betrayers) they hire the men with guns the uniforms the policccars the patrolwagons

all right you have won you will kill the brave men our friends tonight

there is nothing left to do we are beaten we the beaten crowd together in these old dingy schoolrooms on Salem Street shuffle up and down the gritty creaking stairs sit hunched with bowed heads on benches and hear the old words of the haters of oppression made new in sweat and agony tonight

our work is over the scribbled phrases the nights typing releases the smell of the printshop the sharp reek of newprinted leaflets the rush for Western Union stringing words into wires the search for stinging words to make you feel who are your oppressors America

America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul

their hired men sit on the judge's bench they sit back with their feet on the tables under the dome of the State House they are ignorant of our beliefs they have the dollars the guns the armed forces the powerplants

they have built the electricchair and hired the executioner to throw the switch

all right we are two nations

Massachusetts. They were tried amid the tensions of a conservative reaction. The convicted men freely professed adherence to the anarchist ideology, but liberal opinion asserted that they also had the reputation of being honest and quiet workmen, and that there was no

real evidence of their connection with the crime. Appeals of the case delayed their execution, which finally occurred in 1927.

3. This passage in italics is adapted from Vanzetti's prison letters.

America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have bought the laws and fenced off the meadows and cut down the woods for pulp and turned our pleasant cities into slums and sweated the wealth out of our people and when they want to they hire the executioner to throw the switch

but do they know that the old words of the immigrants are being renewed in blood and agony tonight do they know that the old American speech of the haters of oppression is new tonight in the mouth of an old woman from Pittsburgh of a husky boilermaker from Frisco who hopped freights clear from the Coast to come here in the mouth of a Back Bay socialworker in the mouth of an Italian printer of a hobo from Arkansas the language of the beaten nation is not forgotten in our ears tonight

the men in the deathhouse made the old words new before they died

*If it had not been for these things, I might have lived out my life talking at streetcorners to scorning men. I might have died unknown, unmarked, a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life can we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as now we do by an accident<sup>4</sup>*

now their work is over the immigrants haters of oppression lie quiet in black suits in the little undertaking parlor in the North End the city is quiet the men of the conquering nation are not to be seen on the streets

they have won why are they scared to be seen on the streets? on the streets you see only the downcast faces of the beaten the streets belong to the beaten nation all the way to the cemetery where the bodies of the immigrants are to be burned we line the curbs in the drizzling rain we crowd the wet sidewalks elbow to elbow silent pale looking with scared eyes at the coffins

we stand defeated America

1936

### *Vag<sup>5</sup>*

The young man waits at the edge of the concrete, with one hand he grips a rubbed suitcase of phony leather, the other hand almost making a fist, thumb up

that moves in ever so slight an arc when a car slithers past, a truck roars clatters; the wind of cars passing ruffles his hair, slaps

4. This passage in italics is from Vanzetti's prison letters.

5. "Vag" concludes the novel *The Big Money*, and thus also the trilogy, *U.S.A.*, bringing the period of its his-

tory down to the great depression of the thirties. The "vag" (vagabond) then was a familiar sight, as throngs of the homeless unemployed roamed the streets or took to the road as migratory workers.

grit in his face.

Head swims, hunger has twisted the belly tight, he has skinned a heel through the torn sock, feet ache in the broken shoes, under the threadbare suit carefully brushed off with the hand, the torn drawers have a crummy feel, the feel of having slept in your clothes; in the nostrils lingers the staleness of discouraged carcasses crowded into a transient camp, the carbolic stench of the jail, on the taut cheeks the shamed flush from the boring eyes of cops and deputies, railroadbulls (they eat three squares a day, they are buttoned into well-made clothes, they have wives to sleep with, kids to play with after supper, they work for the big men who buy their way, they stick their chests out with the sureness of power behind their backs). Git the hell out, scram. Know what's good for you, you'll make yourself scarce. Gittin' tough, eh? Think you kin take it, eh?

The punch in the jaw, the slam on the head with the nightstick, the wrist grabbed and twisted behind the back, the big knee brought up sharp into the crotch,

the walk out of town with sore feet to stand and wait at the edge of the hissing speeding string of cars where the reek of ether and lead and gas melts into the silent grassy smell of the earth.

Eyes black with want seek out the eyes of the drivers, a hitch, a hundred miles down the road.

Overhead in the blue a plane drones. Eyes follow the silver Douglas that flashes once in the sun and bores its smooth way out of sight into the blue.

(The transcontinental passengers sit pretty, big men with bank-accounts, highlypaid jobs, who are saluted by doormen; telephone-girls say goodmorning to them. Last night after a fine dinner, drinks with friends, they left Newark. Roar of climbing motors slanting up into the inky haze. Lights drop away. An hour staring along a silvery wing at a big lonesome moon hurrying west through curdling scum. Beacons flash in a line across Ohio.

At Cleveland the plane drops banking in a smooth spiral, the string of lights along the lake swings in a circle. Climbing roar of the motors again; slumped in the soft seat drowsing through the flat moonlight night.

Chi. A glimpse of the dipper. Another spiral swoop from cool into hot air thick with dust and the reek of burnt prairies.

Beyond the Mississippi dawn creeps up behind through the murk over the great plains. Puddles of mist go white in the Iowa hills, farms, fences, silos, steel glint from a river. The blinking eyes of the beacons reddening into day. Watercourses vein the eroded hills.

Omaha. Great cumulus clouds, from coppery churning to creamy to silvery white, trail brown skirts of rain over the hot plains.

**Red and yellow badlands, tiny horned shapes of cattle.**

Cheyenne. The cool high air smells of sweetgrass.

The tightbaled clouds to westward burst and scatter in tatters over the strawcolored hills. Indigo mountains jut rimrock. The plane breasts a huge crumbling cloudbank and toboggans over bumpy air across green and crimson slopes into the sunny dazzle of Salt Lake.

The transcontinental passenger thinks contracts, profits, vacation-trips, mighty continent between Atlantic and Pacific, power, wires humming dollars, cities jammed, hills empty, the indiantrail leading into the wagonroad, the macadamed pike, the concrete skyway; trains, planes: history the billiondollar speedup,

and in the bumpy air over the desert ranges towards Las Vegas

sickens and vomits into the carton container the steak and mushrooms he ate in New York. No matter, silver in the pocket, greenbacks in the wallet, drafts, certified checks, plenty restaurants in L. A.)

The young man waits on the side of the road; the plane has gone; thumb moves in a small arc when a car tears hissing past. Eyes seek the driver's eyes. A hundred miles down the road. Head swims, belly tightens, wants crawl over his skin like ants:

went to school, books said opportunity, ads promised speed, own your home, shine bigger than your neighbor, the radiocrooner whispered girls, ghosts of platinum girls coaxed from the screen, millions in winnings were chalked up on the boards in the offices, paychecks were for hands willing to work, the cleared desk of an executive with three telephones on it;

waits with swimming head, needs knot the belly, idle hands numb, beside the speeding traffic.

A hundred miles down the road.

1936

## JAMES T. FARRELL

(1904-)

No novelist of his generation has written with more conscientious fidelity and dedication than James T. Farrell. He was driven by the restless compulsion to interpret fictionally the social meaning of the life about him, and few novelists of his high quality have been so productive.

At first it was customary to speak of him as a proletarian novelist. As his own life experience increased in range he encompassed in his fiction a much wider area, although his humanitarian sympathy and the instincts of the social historian have continued, as in the begin-

ning, to kindle his creative energy.

James Thomas Farrell was born on February 27, 1904, on the South Side of Chicago, the scene of his Studs Lonigan trilogy and his Danny O'Neill cycle of novels. He attended parochial schools through high school, earning part of his expenses from boyhood days, robustly interested in books and baseball, each later to become a subject for literary enthusiasm and insight.

Farrell's point of view in his early and best-known novels was that of the boy. Few novelists have equaled him in the power to portray a particular world of youth. Studs and Danny, unlike Dickens' waifs, are not destitute or slum-bound; they are of the great city majority, and yet their lives provide only two possibilities for survival—the quick hardening into conformity, or some kind of escape, either violent, or, less frequently, by an accident of fate or a special talent for improvement. Studs Lonigan is a victim; Danny O'Neill is a victor of sorts.

For Farrell himself, the novelist's inspiration provided an objective relationship with the teeming life about him. At twenty-two he enrolled for part-time courses at the University of Chicago, while continuing to support himself by a variety of temporary employments. He worked in the office of an express company, in a cigar store, and in a filling station. Later he became a part-time newspaper reporter. He had the advantage

of a course with the talented teacher, Professor James Weber Linn, who saw promise in stories that Farrell presented as class assignments. One, "Studs," was a study of his first famous character. In 1929 Farrell left the University with the idea of giving his energy to this novel, meanwhile earning his way as journalist and periodical writer.

*Young Lonigan* (1932) was an artistic success, but the author's creative originality and power were not fully recognized until the three novels of the Lonigan trilogy were brought together in 1935. His serious short stories, of which he has written a great many, are in general of a piece with his novels, uniting character interest with psychological and social implications, as is evident in the example reproduced in the text below. Also by 1935 Farrell had begun to develop his second central character, Danny O'Neill, in *Gas-House McGinty*, and he had begun the first novel of the O'Neill saga, *A World I Never Made*, published the next year, one of his most impressive works.

As Farrell's personal adventure drew him into an ever-widening circle of life, he came to spend long periods in New York and later in Paris, where he has done a great deal of his later writing. The ideas and social movements of the younger intellectuals and writers of his generation are increasingly reflected in the later novels of the O'Neill group, and in the cycle dealing with Bernard Clare [later "Carr"]. In the latter, the



protagonist is a young writer, living in New York, and Farrell has made a vivid record not only of his hero's personal life, and that of the women who form a part of it, but of the ferment of ideas and social experiment which absorbs the various coteries with whom Bernard associates. Thus these volumes, like the earlier works dealing with underprivileged boyhood, are novels of character steadily motivated by social purpose.

A penetrating student of the literature of ideas, Farrell outgrew Social Darwinism and Marx, although the welfare of his characters is largely conditioned by economic environment. Yet he is not a materialist, for the spirit of man is his principal object and concern; nor is he a pessimistic determinist, for a large proportion of his characters, by reason of their own virtue and will, have been able to escape from an environment repugnant to their human dignity and spiritual life. The humanitarian spirit persists in Farrell's writing, and he has fought publicly against both fascist and communist totalitarianism, motivated by that belief in the individual which is basic in American idealism.

Farrell's style has been the subject of considerable comment, but it is wholly consistent with his materials. It is, as Beach remarked, "the plainest, soberest, most straightforward, of any living novelist. There is nothing commonplace about it, for there is no prosing self-consciousness.

\* \* \* The acts and thoughts

of the characters are stated in the simplest terms, and the rest is their very speech, with the edge and tang of what is said in deadly earnest." If his style seems purposefully devoid of impressionistic heightening, if successive episodes tend to level out, that too is consistent with this author's declaration of his "major aim as a writer—to write so that life may speak for itself."

Among Farrell's major novels there are three groups, or cycles. The Studs Lonigan cycle comprises *Young Lonigan: A Boyhood on the Chicago Streets*, 1932; *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan*, 1934; and *Judgment Day*, 1935: in one volume, *Studs Lonigan: A Trilogy*, 1935. Danny O'Neill is a minor character in *Gas-House McGinty*, 1933. He becomes the dominant figure in the cycle including *A World I Never Made*, 1936; *No Star Is Lost*, 1938; *Father and Son*, 1940; *My Days of Anger*, 1943; and *The Face of Time*, 1953. Bernard Clare, 1946, introduces the title character, protagonist also of *The Road Between*, 1949, *This Man and This Woman*, 1951, and the end of the cycle, *Yet Other Waters*, 1952.

Volumes of short stories include *Calico Shoes*, 1934; *Guillotine Party*, 1935; *Can All This Grandeur Perish?* 1937; *\$1000 a Week*, 1942; *To Whom It May Concern*, 1944; *When Boyhood Dreams Come True*, 1946; *The Life Adventurous*, 1947; *An American Dream Girl and Other Stories*, 1950; *French Girls Are Vicious*, 1955; *An Omnibus of Short Stories*, 1956, a collection of three previous volumes; and *A Dangerous Woman, and Other Stories*, 1957. *My Baseball Diary*, 1957, is reminiscent commentary; *It Has Come to Pass*, 1958, is the author's personal reaction to modern Israel.

Volumes of essays on literature and society include *A Note on Literary Criticism*, 1936; *The League of Frightened Philistines*, 1945; *Literature and Morality*, 1947.

Critical accounts of definite value will be found in Joseph Warren Beach, *American Fiction, 1920-1940*, 1941; and Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America*, 1941. Autobiographical essays appeared as *Reflections at Fifty*, 1954.

The Fastest Runner on Sixty-first Street<sup>1</sup>

Morty Aiken liked to run and to skate. He liked running games and races. He liked running so much that sometimes he'd go over to Washington Park all by himself and run just for the fun of it. He got a kick out of running, and he had raced every kid he could get to run against him. His love of racing and running had even become a joke among many of the boys he knew. But even when they gave him the horse laugh it was done in a good-natured way, because he was a very popular boy. Older fellows liked him, and when they would see him, they'd say, there's a damn good kid and a damned fast runner.

When he passed his fourteenth birthday, Morty was a trifle smaller than most boys of his own age. But he was well known, and, in a way, almost famous in his own neighborhood. He lived at Sixty-first and Eberhardt, but kids in the whole area had heard of him, and many of them would speak of what a runner and what a skater Morty Aiken was.

He won medals in playground tournaments, and, in fact, he was the only lad from his school who had ever won medals in these tournaments. In these events he became the champion in the fifty-and hundred-yard dash, and with this he gained the reputation of being the best runner, for his age, on the South Side of Chicago.

He was as good a skater as he was a runner. In winter, he was to be seen regularly almost every day on the ice at the Washington Park lagoon or over on the Midway. He had a pair of Johnson racers which his father had given him, and he treasured these more than any other possession. His mother knitted him red socks and a red stocking cap for skating, and he had a red-and-white sweater. When he skated, he was like a streak of red. His form was excellent, and his sense of himself and of his body on the ice was sure and right. Almost every day there would be a game of I-Got-It. The skater who was *it* would skate in a wide circle, chased by the pack until he was caught. Morty loved to play I-Got-It, and on many a day this boy in short pants, wearing the red stocking cap, the red-and-white sweater, and the thick, knitted red woolen socks coming above the black shoes of his Johnson racers, would lead the pack, circling around and around and around, his head forward, his upper torso bent forward, his hands behind his back, his legs working with grace and giving him a speed that sometimes seemed miraculous. And in February, 1919, Morty competed in an ice derby, conducted under the auspices of the *Chicago Clarion*. He won two gold medals. His picture was on the first page of the sports section of

1. From *An American Dream Girl and Other Stories* (1950).

the Sunday *Clarion*. All in all, he was a famous and celebrated lad. His father and mother were proud of him. His teacher and Mrs. Bixby, the principal of the school, were proud of him. Merchants on Sixty-first Street were proud of him. There was not a lad in the neighborhood who was greeted on the street by strangers as often as Morty.

Although he was outwardly modest, Morty had his dreams. He was graduated from grammar school in 1919, and was planning to go to Park High in the fall. He was impatient to go to high school and to get into high-school track meets. He'd never been coached, and yet look how good he was! Think of how good he would be when he had some coaching! He'd be a streak of lightning, if ever there was one. He dreamed that he would be called the Human Streak of Lightning. And after high school there would be college, college track meets, and the Big Ten championship, and after that he would join an athletic club and run in track meets, and he would win a place on the Olympic team, and somewhere, in Paris or Rome or some European city, he would beat the best runners in the world, and, like Ty Cobb<sup>2</sup> in baseball and Jess Willard<sup>3</sup> in prize fighting, he'd be the world's greatest runner.

And girls would all like him, and the most beautiful girl in the world would marry him. He liked girls, but girls liked him even more than he liked them. In May, a little while before his graduation, the class had a picnic, and they played post office. The post office was behind a clump of bushes in Jackson Park. He was called to the post office more than any other of the boys. There was giggling and talking and teasing, but it hadn't bothered him, especially because he knew that the other fellows liked and kind of envied him. To Morty, this was only natural. He accepted it. He accepted the fact that he was a streak of lightning on his feet and on the ice, and that this made him feel somehow different from other boys and very important. Even Tony Rabuski looked at him in this way, and if any kid would have picked on him, Tony would have piled into that kid. Tony was the toughest boy in school, and he was also considered to be the dumbest. He was also the poorest. He would often come to school wearing a black shirt, because a black shirt didn't show the dirt the way that other shirts did, and his parents couldn't afford to buy him many shirts. One day Tony was walking away from school with Morty, and Tony said:

"Kid, you run de fastest, I fight de best in de whole school. We make a crack-up team. We're pals. Shake, kid, we're pals."

Morty shook Tony's hand. For a fourteen-year-old boy, Tony had

2. Tyrus Raymond Cobb (born 1886), famous for his batting and base-stealing.

3. Jess Willard (born 1883), heavyweight champion from 1915 to 1919.

very big and strong hands. The other kids sometimes called them "meat hooks."

Morty looked on this handshake as a pledge. He and Tony became friends, and they were often together. Morty had Tony come over to his house to play, and sometimes Tony stayed for a meal. Tony ate voraciously and wolfishly. When Morty's parents spoke of the way Tony ate and of the quantity of food he ate, Morty would reply by telling them that Tony was his friend.

Because he was poor and somewhat stupid, a dull and fierce resentment smoldered in Tony. Other boys out-talked him, and they were often able to plague and annoy him, and then outrun him because he was heavy footed. The kids used to laugh at Tony because they said he had lead, iron, and bricks in his big feet. After Morty and Tony had shaken hands and become pals, Morty never would join the other boys in razzing Tony. And he and Tony doped out a way that would permit Tony to get even with kids who tried to torment him. If some of the boys made game of Tony until he was confused and enraged and went for them, Morty would chase the boys. He had no difficulty in catching one of them. When he caught any of the boys who'd been teasing and annoying Tony, he'd usually manage to hold the boy until Tony would lumber up and exact his punishment and revenge. Sometimes Tony would be cruel, and on a couple of occasions when Tony, in a dull and stupefied rage, was sitting on a hurt, screaming boy and pounding him, Morty ordered Tony to lay off. Tony did so instantly. Morty didn't want Tony to be too cruel. He had come to like Tony and to look on him as a big brother. He'd always wanted a brother, and sometimes he would imagine how wonderful it would be if Tony could even come to live at his house.

The system Morty and Tony worked out, with Morty chasing and catching one of the boys who ragged Tony, worked out well. Soon the kids stopped ragging Tony. Because of their fear, and because they liked and respected Morty and wanted him to play with them, they began to accept Tony. And Tony began to change. Once accepted, so that he was no longer the butt of jokes, he looked on all the boys in Morty's gang as his pals. He would protect them as he would protect Morty. Tony then stopped scowling and making fierce and funny faces and acting in many odd little ways. After he became accepted, as a result of being Morty's pal, his behavior changed, and because he was strong and could fight, the boys began to admire him. At times he really hoped for strange boys to come around the neighborhood and act like bullies so he could beat them up. He wanted to fight and punch because he could feel powerful and would be praised and admired.

II

Ever since he had been a little fellow, Tony had often been called a "Polack" or a "dirty Polack." After he became one of the gang or group around Morty, some of the boys would tell him that he was a "white Polack." In his slow way, he thought about these words and what they meant. When you were called certain words, you were laughed at, you were looked at as if something were wrong with you. If you were a Polack, many girls didn't want to have anything to do with you. The boys and girls who weren't Polacks had fun together that Polacks couldn't have. Being a Polack and being called a Polack was like being called a sonofabitch. It was a name. When you were called a name like this, you were looked at as a different kind of kid from one who wasn't called a name. Morty Aiken wasn't called names. Tony didn't want to be called names. And if he fought and beat up those who called him names, they would be afraid of him. He wanted that. But he also wanted to have as much fun as the kids had who weren't called these names. And he worked it out that these kids felt better when they called other kids names. He could fight and he could call names, and if he called a kid a name, and that kid got tough, he could beat him up. He began to call names. And there was a name even worse than Polack—"nigger." If Tony didn't like a kid, he called him a "nigger." And he talked about the "niggers." He felt as good as he guessed these other kids did when he talked about the "niggers." And they could be beat up. They weren't supposed to go to Washington Park because that was a park for the whites. That was what he had often heard.

He heard it said so much that he believed it. He sometimes got a gang of the boys together and they would roam Washington Park, looking for colored boys to beat up. Morty went with them. He didn't particularly like to beat up anyone, but when they saw a colored kid and chased him, he would always be at the head, and he would be the one who caught the colored boy. He could grab or tackle him, and by that time the others would catch up. He worked the same plan that he and Tony had worked against the other boys. And after they caught and beat up a colored boy, they would all talk and shout and brag about what they had done, and talk about how they had each gotten in their licks and punches and kicks, and how fast Morty had run to catch that shine, and what a sock Tony had given him, and, talking all together and strutting and bragging, they felt good and proud of themselves, and they talked about how the Sixty-first Street boys would see to it that Washington Park would stay a white man's park.

And this became more and more important to Tony. There were those names, "Polack," "dirty Polack," "white Polack." If you

could be called a "Polack," you weren't considered white. Well, when he beat them up, was he or wasn't he white? They knew. After the way he clouted these black ones, how could the other kids not say that Tony Rabuski wasn't white? That showed them all. That showed he was a hero. He was a hero as much as Morty Aiken was.

### III

Morty was a proud boy on the night he graduated from grammar school in June, 1919. When he received his diploma, there was more applause in the auditorium than there was for any other member of the class. He felt good when he heard this clapping, but, then, he expected it. He lived in a world where he was somebody, and he was going into a bigger world where he would still be somebody. He was a fine, clean-looking lad, with dark hair, frank blue eyes, regular and friendly features. He was thin but strong. He wore a blue serge suit with short trousers and a belted jacket, and a white shirt with a white bow tie. His class colors, orange and black ribbons, were pinned on the lapel of his coat. He was scrubbed and washed and combed. And he was in the midst of an atmosphere of gaiety and friendliness. The teachers were happy. There were proud and happy parents and aunts and uncles and older sisters. The local alderman made a speech praising everybody, and speaking of the graduating boys and girls as fine future Americans. And he declared that in their midst there were many promising lads and lassies who would live to enjoy great esteem and success. He also said that among this group there was also one who not only promised to become a stellar athlete but who had already won gold medals and honors.

And on that night, Morty's father and mother were very happy. They kept beaming with proud smiles. Morty was their only son. Mr. Aiken was a carpenter. He worked steadily, and he had saved his money so that the house he owned was now paid for. He and his wife were quiet-living people who minded their own business. Mr. Aiken was tall and rugged, with swarthy skin, a rough-hewn face, and the look and manner of a workman. He was a gentle but firm man, and was inarticulate with his son. He believed that a boy should have a good time in sports, should fight his own battles, and that boyhood—the best time of one's life—should be filled with happy memories.

The mother was faded and maternal. She usually had little to say; her life was dedicated to caring for her son and her husband and to keeping their home clean and orderly. She was especially happy to know that Morty liked running and skating, because these were not dangerous.

After the graduation ceremonies the father and mother took

Morty home where they had cake and ice cream. The three of them sat together eating these refreshments, quiet but happy. The two parents were deeply moved. They were filled with gratification because of the applause given their son when he had walked forward on the stage to receive his diploma. They were raising a fine boy, and they could look people in the neighborhood in the eye and know that they had done their duty as parents. The father was putting money by for Morty's college education and hoped that, besides becoming a famous runner, Morty would become a professional man. He talked of this to the son and the mother over their ice cream and cake, and the boy seemed to accept his father's plans. And as the father gazed shyly at Morty he thought of his own boyhood on a Wisconsin farm, and of long summer days there. Morty had the whole summer before him. He would play and grow and enjoy himself. He was not a bad boy, he had never gotten into trouble, he wasn't the kind of boy who caused worry. It was fine. In August there would be his vacation, and they would all go to Wisconsin, and he would go fishing with the boy.

That evening Morty's parents went to bed feeling that this was the happiest day of their lives.

And Morty went to bed, a happy, light-hearted boy, thinking of the summer vacation which had now begun.

#### IV

The days passed. Some days were better than others. Some days there was little to do, and on other days there was a lot to do. Morty guessed that this was turning out to be as good as any summer he could remember.

Tony Rabuski was working, delivering flowers for a flower merchant, but he sometimes came around after supper, and the kids sat talking or playing on the steps of Morty's house or of another house in the neighborhood. Morty liked to play Run, Sheep, Run, because it gave him a chance to run, and he also liked hiding and searching and hearing the signals called out, and the excitement and tingling and fun when he'd be hiding, perhaps under some porch, and the other side would be near, maybe even passing right by, and he, and the other kids with him, would have to be so still, and he'd even try to hold his breath, and then finally, the signal for which he had been waiting—Run, Sheep, Run—and the race, setting off, tearing away along sidewalks and across streets, running like hell and like a streak of lightning, and feeling your speed in your legs and muscles and getting to the goal first.

The summer was going by, and it was fun. There wasn't anything to worry about and there were dreams. Edna Purcell, who had been in his class, seemed sweet on him, and she was a wonderful girl. One night she and some other girls came around, and they sat on

the steps of Morty's house and played Tin-Tin. Morty had to kiss her. He did, with the kids laughing, and it seemed that something happened to him. He hadn't been shy when he was with girls, but now, when Edna was around, he would be shy. She was wonderful. She was more than wonderful. When he did have the courage to talk to her, he talked about running and iceskating. She told him she knew what a runner and skater he was. A fast skater, such as he was, wouldn't want to think of skating with someone like her. He said that he would, and that next winter he would teach her to skate better. Immediately, he found himself wishing it were next winter already, and he would imagine himself skating with her, and he could see them walking over to the Washington Park lagoon and coming home again. He would carry her skates, and when they breathed they would be able to see their breaths, and the weather would be cold and sharp and would make her red cheeks redder, and they would be alone, walking home, with the snow packed on the park, alone, the two of them walking in the park, with it quiet, so quiet that you would hearing nothing, and it would be like they were in another world, and then, there in the quiet park, with white snow all over it, he would kiss Edna Purcell. He had kissed Edna when they'd played Tin-Tin, and Post Office, but he looked forward to the day that he got from her the kiss that would mean that she was his girl, his sweetheart, and the girl who would one day be his wife just like his mother was his father's wife. Everything he dreamed of doing, all the honors he would get, all the medals and cups he dreamed of winning—now all of this would be for Edna. And she was also going to Park High. He would walk to school with her, eat lunch with her, walk her home from school. When he ran in high-school track meets for Park High, Edna would be in the stands. He would give her his medals. He wanted to give her one of his gold skating medals, but he didn't know how to go about asking her to accept it.

No matter what Morty thought about, he thought about Edna at the same time. He thought about her every time he dreamed. When he walked on streets in the neighborhood, he thought of her. When he went to Washington Park or swimming, he thought of Edna. Edna, just to think of her, Edna made everything in the world wonderfully wonderful.

And thus the summer of 1919 was passing for Morty.

# V

Morty sat on the curb with a group of boys, and they were bored and restless. They couldn't agree about what game to play, where to go, what to do to amuse themselves. A couple of them started to play Knife but gave it up. Morty suggested a race, but no one would race him. They couldn't agree on playing ball. One boy sug-



gested swimming, but no one would go with him. Several of the boys wrestled, and a fight almost started. Morty sat by himself and thought about Edna. He guessed that he'd rather be with her than with the kids. He didn't know where she was. If he knew that she'd gone swimming, he'd go swimming. He didn't know what to do with himself. If he only could find Edna and if they would do something together, or go somewhere, like Jackson Park Beach, just the two of them, why, then, he knew that today would be the day that he would find a way of giving her one of his *Clarion* gold medals. But he didn't know where she was.

Tony Rabuski came around with four tough-looking kids. Tony had lost his job, and he said that the niggers had jumped him when he was delivering flowers down around Forty-seventh Street, and he wanted his pals to stick by him. He told them what had happened, but they didn't get it, because Tony couldn't tell a story straight. Tony asked them didn't they know what was happening? There were race riots, and the beaches and Washington Park and the whole South Side were full of dark clouds, and over on Wentworth Avenue the big guys were fighting, and the dark clouds were out after whites. They didn't believe Tony. But Morty said it was in the newspapers, and that there were race riots. The bored boys became excited. They bragged about what they would do if the jigs came over to their neighborhood. Tony said they had to get some before they got this far. When asked where they were, Tony said all over. Finally, they went over to Washington Park, picking up sticks and clubs and rocks on the way. The park was calm. A few adults were walking and strolling about. A lad of eighteen or nineteen lay under a tree with his head in the lap of a girl who was stroking his hair. Some of the kids smirked and leered as they passed the couple. Morty thought of Edna and wished he could take her to Washington Park and kiss her. There were seven or eight rowboats on the lagoon, but all of the occupants were white. The park sheep were grazing. Tony threw a rock at them, frightening the sheep, and they all ran, but no cop was around to shag them. They passed the boathouse, talking and bragging. They now believed the rumors which they themselves had made up. White girls and women were in danger, and anything might happen. A tall lad sat in the grass with a nursemaid. A baby carriage was near them. The lad called them over and asked them what they were doing with their clubs and rocks. Tony said they were looking for niggers. The lad said that he'd seen two near the goldfish pond and urged the boys to go and get the sonsofbitches. Screaming and shouting, they ran to the goldfish pond. Suddenly, Tony shouted: "Dark clouds."

## VI

They ran. Two Negro boys, near the goldfish pond, heard Tony's cry, and then the others' cry, and they ran. The mob of boys chased them. Morty was in the lead. Running at the head of the screaming, angry pack of boys, he forgot everything except how well and how fast he was running, and images of Edna flashed in and out of his mind. If she could see him running! He was running beautifully. He'd catch them. He was gaining. The colored boys ran in a northwest direction. They crossed the drive which flanked the southern end of the Washington Park ball field. Morty was stopped by a funeral procession. The other boys caught up with him. When the funeral procession passed, it was too late to try and catch the colored boys they had been chasing. Angry, bragging, they crossed over to the ball field and marched across it, shouting and yelling. They picked up about eight boys of their own age and three older lads of seventeen or eighteen. The older lads said they knew where they'd find some shins. Now was the time to teach them their place once and for all. Led by the older boys, they emerged from the north end of Washington Park and marched down Grand Boulevard, still picking up men and boys as they went along. One of the men who joined them had a gun. They screamed, looked in doorways for Negroes, believed everything anyone said about Negroes, and kept boasting about what they would do when they found some.

"Dark clouds," Tony boomed.

The mob let out. They crossed to the other side of Grand Boulevard and ran cursing and shouting after a Negro. Morty was in the lead. He was outrunning the men and the older fellows. He heard them shouting behind him. He was running. He was running like the playground hundred-yard champion of the South Side of Chicago. He was running like the future Olympic champion. He was running like he'd run for Edna. He was tearing along, pivoting out of the way of shocked, surprised pedestrians, running, really running. He was running like a streak of lightning.

The Negro turned east on Forty-eighth Street. He had a start of a block. But Morty would catch him. He turned into Forty-eighth Street. He tore along the center of the street. He began to breathe heavily. But he couldn't stop running now. He was out-distancing the gang, and he was racing his own gang and the Negro he was chasing. Down the center of the street and about half a block ahead of him, the Negro was tearing away for dear life. But Morty was gaining on him. Gaining. He was now about a half a block ahead of his own gang. They screamed murderously behind him. And they encouraged him. He heard shouts of encouragement.

"Catch 'em, Morty boy!"

"Thata boy, Morty boy!"

He heard Tony's voice. He ran.

The Negro turned into an alley just east of Forestville. Morty ran. He turned into the alley just in time to see the fleeing Negro spurt into a yard in the center of the block. He'd gained more. He was way ahead of the white mob. Somewhere behind him they were coming and yelling. He tore on. He had gained his second wind. He felt himself running, felt the movement of his legs and muscles, felt his arms, felt the sensation of his whole body as he raced down the alley. Never had he run so swiftly. Suddenly Negroes jumped out of yards. He was caught and pinioned. His only thought was one of surprise. Before he even realized what had happened, his throat was slashed. He fell, bleeding. Feebly, he mumbled just once:

"Mother!"

The Negroes disappeared.

He lay bleeding in the center of the dirty alley, and when the gang of whites caught up with him they found him dead in dirt and his own blood in the center of the alley. No Negroes were in sight. The whites surrounded his body. The boys trembled with fear. Some of them cried. One wet his pants. Then they became maddened. And they stood in impotent rage around the bleeding, limp body of Morty Aiken, the fastest runner on Sixty-first Street.



# Poets at Mid-Century

RICHARD EBERHART

(1904-)

Of Richard Eberhart's earliest poems Edith Sitwell observed that they "are poems of ideas, but have a warmth of humanity as strong as their intellect." The unusual demands that he makes upon the reader's intelligence are consistent with his reactions to a "world too much in joint," where only "a hard intellectual light" can restore "the moral grandeur of man." Even his simpler lyrics are often intensified by sudden violence, by some striking or grotesque extension of experience or verbal image, by illogicality or enigma. By such satiric disorientation he evokes the humanist's faith in order, in

the ultimate reasonableness of man. Eberhart was born in Minnesota in 1904; he completed the baccalaureate at Dartmouth in 1926 and the M.A. at Cambridge, England, in 1933. He served in the U.S. Navy during the war, and then succeeded in business before becoming poet in residence and professor at a succession of colleges.

Eberhart's volumes of poetry are: *A Bravery of Earth*, 1930; *Reading The Spirit*, 1936, 1937; *Song and Idea*, 1940, 1942; *Poems, New and Selected*, 1944; *Burr Oaks*, 1947; *Brotherhood of Men*, 1949; *An Herb Basket*, 1950; *Selected Poems*, 1951; *The Visionary Farms* (drama), 1952; *Undercliff: Poems, 1946-1953*, 1953; *Great Praises*, 1957. *Collected Poems: 1930-1960* (1960) is comprehensive.

## For a Lamb<sup>1</sup>

I saw on the slant hill a putrid lamb,  
Propped with daisies. The sleep looked deep,  
The face nudged in the green pillow  
But the guts were out for crows to eat.

Where's the lamb? whose tender plaint  
Said all for the mute breezes.  
Say he's in the wind somewhere,  
Say, there's a lamb in the daisies.

5

1936, 1951

1. First collected in *Reading The Spirit* (1936); included in *Selected Poems* (1951).

## Rumination<sup>2</sup>

When I can hold a stone within my hand  
And feel time make it sand and soil, and see  
The roots of living things grow in this land,  
Pushing between my fingers flower and tree,  
Then I shall be as wise as death, 5  
For death has done this and he will  
Do this to me, and blow his breath  
To fire my clay, when I am still.

1947, 1951

## "When Doris Danced"<sup>3</sup>

When Doris danced under the oak tree  
The sun himself might wish to see,  
Might bend beneath those lovers, leaves,  
While her her virgin step she weaves  
And envious cast his famous hue 5  
To make her daft, yet win her too.

When Doris danced under the oak tree  
Slow John, so stormed in heart, at sea  
Gone all his store, a wreck he lay.  
But on the ground the sun-beams play. 10  
They lit his face in such degree  
Doris lay down, all out of pity.

1951

## Experience Evoked<sup>7</sup>

Now come to me all men  
With savagery and innocence,  
With axe to chop the fir tree,  
Or seed, small, for the immense  
Sewing of earth with old Rose. 5  
Now come all men, arrayed  
With the colours of the garden  
Around them where they stayed  
Till bone began to harden  
Under the thinning of the nose. 10  
Come all men, unto whom  
Wind was a snarling wire whip

2. First collected in *Burr Oaks* (1947); included in *Selected Poems* (1951). 3. From *Selected Poems* (1951).

7. From *Selected Poems* (1951).

In the contusions of a doom  
 And with red flecks on their lip  
 They leaped up, danced, grew tall.  
 Come all, the babe bound  
 In terror and panic cry;  
 Or an old man found  
 With a skylark in his eye.<sup>8</sup>  
 Come, harsh shroud over all.

15

20

1951

8. Cf. those above, whom the "babe bound" (the Messiah) filled with "terror." The old man's "skylark" might be either of two defined in the diction-

ary: a bird "noted for singing in almost perpendicular flight toward the sky" or that "skylark" which is "a gay and playful frolic."

## MURIEL RUKEYSER

(1913-)

Muriel Rukeyser's first volume, *Theory of Flight* (1935) reflected her interest in the machine and in less tangible manifestations of human power, the creative forms of art or love. She grew up in New York, where power and violence prodigiously mingled. As a college magazine reporter she only whetted her desire to travel and to write; later she was one of the reporters arrested at the Scottsboro trial; she covered the People's Olympiad in republican Spain and saw the civil war begin; she lived for a time in Mexico.

The long poems "Ajanta" (1944) and *Orpheus* (1949) were inspired by primitive religion and myth. In the latter she

wrote "Now in our time, many of the sources of power are obscured. Using \* \* \* studies in symbolism, studies in individual lives and experience, I have hoped to indicate some of the valid sources of power." In this period of maturity she abandoned the tendency to over-explicit satire, and gave rein to her mastery of symbolic expression and to her hard-won "belief in the love of the world, woman, spirit, and man."

The *Selected Poems* (1951) is a good cross section of her works. Volumes of her poetry are *Theory of Flight*, 1935; *U.S. 1*, 1938; *A Turning Wind*, 1939; *The Soul and Body of John Brown*, 1941; *Wake Island*, 1942; *Beast in View*, 1944; *The Green Wave*, 1948; *Elegies*, 1949; *Orpheus*, 1949; *Body of Waking*, 1958.

### This Place in the Ways<sup>1</sup>

Having come to this place  
 I set out once again  
 On the dark and marvelous way  
 From where I began:  
 Belief in the love of the world,  
 Woman, spirit, and man.

5

1. First collected in *The Green Wave* (1948); included in *Selected Poems*

(1951), where the poet significantly gave it the initial position.

Having failed in all things  
 I enter a new age  
 Seeing the old ways as toys,  
 The houses of a stage 10  
 Painted and long forgot;  
 And I find love and rage.

Rage for the world as it is  
 But for what it may be  
 More love now than last year. 15  
 And always less self-pity  
 Since I know in a clearer light  
 The strength of the mystery.

And at this place in the ways  
 I wait for song, 20  
 My poem-hand still, on the paper,  
 All night long.  
 Poems in throat and hand, asleep,  
 And my storm beating strong!

1948, 1951

Mortal Girl<sup>3</sup>

The girl being chosen stood in her naked room  
 Singing at last alone naked and proud  
 Now that the god had departed and his doom  
 Guarded her door forever and the sky  
 Would flame in trophies all night and every day. 5  
 Sang : When your white sun stood still,<sup>4</sup> I put away  
 My garments and my crafts and you came down.  
 When you took me as a flame, I turned to flame;  
 In whiteness lay on the mist-flower river-bank  
 When you as a swan arrived, and cloudy in my tower 10  
 For you as a shower of gold, the lily bright in my hand  
 Once, you as unthinkable light.

Make me more human,

3. First collected in *Beast in View* (1944); included in *Selected Poems* (1951).

4. Lines 6-12 consolidate three Greek legends of the love of Zeus, god of the heavens, for mortal women. The jealous goddess, Hera, in disguise, persuaded the mortal Semele to demand that Zeus visit her only in all his majesty; he reluctantly did so, and his splendor "took her as a flame"; from her ashes the newborn Dionysus rose to become the

god of wine. "As a swan" Zeus visited Leda, wife of Sparta's king, thus fathering Helen of Troy and the twin heroes and divinities, Castor and Pollux, the Gemini of the Zodiac. "As a shower of gold" Zeus visited Danae, daughter of Argos' king, who confined her in a high tower lest she should bear the son destined to kill him; and Perseus, born of this visitation, accidentally fulfilled the prophecy with a misdirected discus.

Give me the consciousness  
 Of every natural shape, to lie here ready  
 For love as every power. 15  
 I wait in all my hopes,  
 Poet beast and woman,  
 Wait for the superhuman,  
 The god who invaded the gold lady,  
 The god who spoke to the naked princess, 20  
 The storm over the fiery wanderer.  
 Within me your city burning, and your desperate tree.  
 All that the song and the apparition gave  
 To seal my mouth with fire, make me mad  
 With song and pain and waiting, leave me free 25  
 In all my own shapes, deep in the spirit's cave  
 To sing again the entrance of the god.

1944, 1951

Beast in View<sup>8</sup>

Configurations of time and singing  
 Bring me to a dark harbor where  
 The chase is drawn to a beginning.  
 And all the myths are gathered there.  
 I know the trees as fountains and the stars' 5  
 Far fires fountains and your love  
 A vivid fountain, and the bars  
 Broken about me let me move  
 Among the fountains. At last seeing  
 I came here by obscure preparing, 10  
 In vigils and encounters being  
 Both running hunter and fierce prey waring.<sup>9</sup>  
 I hunted and became the followed,  
 Through many lives fleeing the last me,<sup>1</sup>  
 And changing fought down a far road 15  
 Through time to myself as I will be.  
 Chaos prepared me, and I find the track,  
 Through life and darkness seek my myth—  
 Move toward it, hunting grow more like,  
 Draw near, and know it through our path. 20  
 Know only that we run one path.

1944, 1951

8. Collected in *Beast in View* (1944); included in *Selected Poems* (1951).

9. The verb "to ware," now chiefly a hunting term, has connotations of "to guard against," "to avoid."

1. The idea of one's individual identity

or myth (cf. ll. 4 and 18) as ideally always in existence, seeking one, yet always requiring to be hunted (l. 14), has overtones of Emersonian and Platonic idealism.



# ROBERT LOWELL

(1917-)

In spite of the slow accumulation of Lowell's poems, he is regarded as one of the new poets of the mid-century who might influence the literature of his generation. Born in Boston in 1917, Robert Traill Spence Lowell bore in his name an embarrassing tradition of family accomplishment. This he sublimated in his interest in family situations, often reflected in his poems, and he allowed his tragic sense and his comic spirit to rummage in his family attics. He was schooled at Harvard and at Kenyon College (1940), at the latter receiving encouragement from the poet-teacher, John Crowe Ransom, and from student poets, including Randall Jarrell. His conscientious objection to the bombing of civilians, his consequent imprisonment,

and his conversion to Catholicism have all influenced his poetry, but not to the exclusion of earlier interests in the religious philosophy of the learned Puritans and the common life of the New England coast. His poems represent a considerable range of secular and religious interests, including the usable past of our western literature, which, like Pound, he employs with power and independence. Lowell is on the faculty of Boston University. His second volume, *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946), was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

His published volumes are *Land of Unlikeness*, 1944 (now unavailable); *Lord Weary's Castle*, 1946; *The Mills of the Kavenaugh*, 1951; *Poems: 1938-1949*, 1950, which includes the two volumes above, except the title poem, "The Mills of the Kavenaugh"; and *Life Studies*, 1959.

## After the Surprising Conversions<sup>8</sup>

September twenty-second, Sir:<sup>9</sup> today  
I answer. In the latter part of May,  
Hard on our Lord's Ascension, it began  
To be more sensible.<sup>1</sup> A gentleman  
Of more than common understanding, strict  
In morals, pious in behavior, kicked

5

8. First collected in *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946) and reprinted in *Poems: 1938-1949* (1950). The following notes, perhaps unusually full, are intended to show the poet using the words and the substance of a document to create a work of art, a new thing.  
9. The source of this poem is a letter written by Jonathan Edwards on May 30, 1735 ("A Narrative of Surprising Conversions," Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, 1808). Edwards' sermons in 1734 inspired the "Great Awakening," a revival in his Northampton parish, whence revivalism spread to the surrounding Massachusetts towns. This letter to Benjamin Colman, Boston

clergyman, in response to his request for information, was later amplified for publication by an account of further remarkable experiences, one of which forms the inspiration for the present poem. The "Great Awakening" continued to influence the development of Protestant denominations in the colonies until about 1750.  
1. "Sensible": archaic for "evident." This line in full (Edwards' supplementary letter, May, 1735) reads: "it began to be very sensible that the spirit of God was gradually withdrawing from us." The following reported misfortunes were taken for proof of this.

Against our goad. A man of some renown,  
 An useful, honored person in the town,<sup>2</sup>  
 He came of melancholy parents; prone  
 To secret spells, for years they kept alone— 10  
 His uncle, I believe, was killed of it:  
 Good people, but of too much or little wit.  
 I preached one Sabbath on a text from Kings;  
 He showed concernment for his soul. Some things  
 In his experience were hopeful. He 15  
 Would sit and watch the wind knocking a tree  
 And praise this countryside our Lord has made.  
 Once when a poor man's heifer died, he laid  
 A shilling on the doorsill; though a thirst  
 For loving shook him like a snake, he durst 20  
 Not entertain much hope of his estate  
 In heaven. Once we saw him sitting late  
 Behind his attic window by a light  
 That guttered on his Bible; through that night  
 He meditated terror, and he seemed 25  
 Beyond advice or reason, for he dreamed  
 That he was called to trumpet Judgment Day  
 To Concord. In the latter part of May  
 He cut his throat.<sup>3</sup> And though the coroner  
 Judged him delirious, soon a noisome stir 30  
 Palsied our village. At Jehovah's nod  
 Satan seemed more let loose amongst us: God  
 Abandoned us to Satan,<sup>4</sup> and he pressed  
 Us hard, until we thought we could not rest  
 Till we had done with life. Content was gone. 35  
 All the good work was quashed. We were undone.  
 The breath of God had carried out a planned

2. In reporting this man's suicide to Colman, Edwards calls him "My Uncle Hawley." Joseph Hawley, who married Edwards' aunt, Rebekah, was the leading merchant of pioneer days in Northampton.

3. "He cut his throat" on June 1, 1735. Edwards wrote: "My Uncle Hawley, the last Sabbath morning, laid violent hands on himself, by cutting his own throat. He had been for a considerable time greatly concerned about the condition of his soul; by the ordering of Providence he was suffered to fall into a deep melancholy, a distemper that the family are very prone to; the devil took the advantage and drove him into despairing thoughts: he was kept very much awake a nights, so that he had very little sleep for two months \* \* \* He was in a great measure beyond a capacity of receiving advice, or being reasoned with. The Coroner's Inquest

judged him delirious."

4. The remainder of the poem reflects this abstruse doctrine. Perry Miller, in *Jonathan Edwards*, comments on this, *passim*: over "three hundred people were converted" at Northampton "during the year" (1734-35); but after Hawley's suicide one heard voices crying, as Edwards reports, "cut your own throat! Now! Now!" (cf. the poem, l. 43); and the initial revival at Northampton was over. Edwards expressed current doctrine in asserting, "The devil took advantage \* \* \* he seems to be in a great rage at this \* \* \* breaking forth of the works of God. I hope it is because he knows that he has but a short time." Edwards knew, as Miller observes, that "the divine spirit has a tempo, a rise and a fall," and will rise again to redeem, as the poem says, "the unpicked apples and at dawn / The small-mouthed bass."

And sensible withdrawal from this land;  
 The multitude, once unconcerned with doubt,  
 Once neither callous, curious nor devout, 40  
 Jumped at broad noon, as though some peddler groaned  
 At it in its familiar twang: "My friend,  
 Cut your own throat. Cut your own throat. Now! Now!"  
 September twenty-second, Sir, the bough  
 Cracks with the unpicked apples, and at dawn 45  
 The small-mouth bass breaks water, gorged with spawn.

1946, 1950

## Her Dead Brother<sup>5</sup>

### I

The Lion of St. Mark's upon the glass  
 Shield in my window reddens, as the night  
 Enchants the swinging dories to its terrors,  
 And dulls your distant wind-stung eyes; alas,  
 Your portrait, coiled in German-silver hawscers, mirrors 5  
 'The sunset as a dragon. Enough light  
 Remains to see you through your varnish. Giving  
 Your life has brought you closer to your friends;  
 Yes, it has brought you home. All's well that ends:<sup>6</sup>  
 Achilles dead is greater than the living; 10  
 My mind holds you as I would have you live,  
 A wintering dragon. Summer was too short  
 When we went picnicking with telescopes  
 And crocking leather handbooks to that fort  
 Above the lank and heroned Sheepscot, where its slopes 15  
 Are clutched by hemlocks—spotting birds. I give  
 You back that idyll, Brother. Was it more?  
 Remember riding, scotching with your spur  
 That four-foot milk-snake in a juniper?  
 Father shellacked it to the ice-house door. 20  
 Then you were grown; I left you on your own.  
 We will forget that August twenty-third,  
 When Mother motored with the maids to Stowe,  
 And the pale summer shades were drawn—so low  
 No one could see us; no, nor catch your hissing word, 25  
 As false as Cressid!<sup>7</sup> Let our deaths atone:  
 The fingers on your sword-knot are alive,

5. In *The Mills of the Kavenaugh* (1951) but also included in the collection published earlier, *Poems: 1938-1949* (1950).

6. Cf. the title *All's Well That Ends Well*, a comedy by Shakespeare.

7. Cressida's desertion of her lover, the

Trojan hero Troilus, and her amours with the victorious Greek commanders have made her the byword for infidelity; the story has been retold since the twelfth century by Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare.

And Hope, that fouls my brightness with its grace,  
Will anchor in the narrows of your face.  
My husband's Packard crunches up the drive.

30

## II

## (THREE MONTHS LATER)

The ice is out: the tidal current swims  
Its blocks against the launches as they pitch  
Under the cruisers of my Brother's fleet.  
The gas, uncoiling from my oven burners, dims  
The face above this bottled *Water Witch*,  
The knockabout my Brother fouled and left to eat  
Its heart out by the Boston Light. My Brother,  
I've saved you in the ice-house of my mind—  
The ice is out. . . . Our fingers lock behind  
The tiller. We are heeling in the smother,  
Our sails, balloon and leg-o'mutton, tell  
The colors of the rainbow; but they flap,  
As the wind fails, and cannot fetch the bell. . . .  
His stick is tapping on the millwheel-step,  
He lights a match, another and another—  
The Lord is dark, and holy is His name;  
By my own hands, into His hands! My burners  
Sing like a kettle, and its nickel mirrors  
Your squadron by the Stygian Landing. Brother,  
The harbor! The torpedoed cruisers flame,  
The motor-launches with their searchlights bristle  
About the targets. You are black. You shout,  
And cup your broken sword-hand. Yes, your whistle  
Across the crackling water: *Quick, the ice is out.* . . .  
The wind dies in our canvas; we were running dead  
Before the wind, but now our sail is part  
Of death. O Brother, a New England town is death  
And incest—and I saw it whole. I said,  
Life is a thing I own. Brother, my heart  
Races for sea-room—we are out of breath.

60

1951

## RICHARD WILBUR

(1921—)

In 1947 Wilbur published his first volume at the age of twenty-six. In 1956, his third volume received three national awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. Richard Wilbur was born in New

York City in 1921. He was graduated from Amherst, served overseas in the infantry, then took his M.A. at Harvard, where he remained to teach. He has taught at Wellesley (1955-57) and since 1957 at Wesleyan University.

Wilbur's poetry always engages the intellect of his reader. The nature of his imagination recalls Frost's praise of the synecdoche as an instrument of revelation. In "The Death of a Toad," for example, a part is substituted for the whole so significantly that an image beyond the immediate image is demanded of the mind.

To Wilbur a poem "is a con-

flict with disorder, not a message from one person to another." Poems are not communication, are not "coerced into being by rational principles, but spring from the imagination, a condition of psychic unity." This poet's concern for structure coincides with his evident response to the sensory appeal of the formal arts—especially painting and the dance. "The strength of the genic," he says, "comes of his being confined in a bottle."

Richard Wilbur's poetry to date is published in *The Beautiful Changes*, 1947; *Ceremony and Other Poems*, 1950; *Things of this World*, 1956; and *Poems, 1943-1956*, 1957.

## Objects<sup>1</sup>

Meridians are a net  
Which catches nothing; that sea-scampering bird  
The gull, though shores lapse every side from sight, can yet  
Sense him to land, but Hanno<sup>2</sup> had not heard

Hesperidean<sup>3</sup> song,  
Had he not gone by watchful periploi:  
Chalk rocks, and isles like beasts, and mountain stains along  
The water-hem, calmed him at last near-by

The clear high hidden chant  
Blown from the spellbound coast, where under drifts  
Of sunlight, under plated leaves, they guard the plant  
By praising it. Among the wedding gifts

Of Herë, were a set  
Of golden McIntoshes,<sup>4</sup> from the Greek

1. In *The Beautiful Changes* (1947); included in the collected *Poems, 1943-1956* (1957).

2. The Carthaginian navigator (470 B.C.) wrote *Periplus*, meaning, roughly, "circumnavigation"; cf. the plural, "periploi," in l. 6. As compared with sailing by chart (cf. "Meridians") or, like gulls, by "sense," Hanno's "watchful" explorations were into the unknown west of Carthage beyond Gibraltar, where on the shore of Morocco he

founded seven "cities" and heard the singing Hesperides (ll. 5-11).

3. Greek legend told of undiscovered far-western islands called Hesperides and of the several nymphs (also called Hesperides) who by their enchanted songs guarded a tree bearing golden apples.

4. The golden apples ("McIntoshes") of the Hesperides were given by Gaea (Earth) as a wedding present to the divinity Hera, wife of Zeus.

Imagination. Guard and gild what's common, and forget 15  
Uses and prices and names; have objects speak.<sup>5</sup>

There's classic and there's quaint,  
And then there is that devout intransitive eye  
Of Pieter de Hooch:<sup>6</sup> see feinting from his plot of paint  
The trench of light on boards, the much-mended dry 20

Courtyard wall of brick,  
And sun submerged in beer, and streaming in glasses,  
The weave of a sleeve, the careful and undulant tile. A quick  
Change of the eye and all this calmly passes

Into a day, into magic. 25  
For is there any end to true textures, to true  
Integuments; do they ever desist from tacit, tragic  
Fading away? Oh maculate, cracked, askew,

Gay-pocked and potsherd world  
I voyage, where in every tangible tree 30  
I see afloat among the leaves, all calm and curled.  
The Cheshire smile<sup>7</sup> which sets me fearfully free.

1947, 1957

### The Death of a Toad<sup>4</sup>

A toad the power mower caught,  
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got  
To the garden verge, and sanctuaried<sup>5</sup> him  
Under the cineraria leaves, in the shade  
Of the ashen heartshaped leaves, in a dim, 5  
Low, and a final glade.

The rare original heartsblood goes,  
Spends on the earthen hide, in the folds and wizenings, flows  
In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes. He lies  
As still as if he would return to stone, 10  
And soundlessly attending, dies  
Toward some deep monotone,

5. This central phrase, "have objects speak," calls attention to Wilbur's emphasis on the meaning of sensory impressions, including the shape, mass, and texture of objects.

6. Pieter de Hooch (or "Hoogh"), ca. 1629-1677, Dutch genre painter admired for mastery of character, color, and light, and for "quaint" scenes; for example, "A Dutch Court Yard"—"in the National Gallery at Washington."

7. Cf. the Cheshire cat giving advice

to Alice in *Wonderland* from its tree-perch, whence it then disappears, leaving its disembodied, enigmatic smile "fading away," like the poem's "objects," "into a day, into magic."

4. In *Ceremony and Other Poems* (1950); included in the collected *Poems* (1957).

5. In some circumstances a consecrated sanctuary has, by law or consent, given the fugitive customary immunity.

Toward misted and ebullient seas  
 And cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia's emperies.<sup>6</sup>  
 Day dwindles, drowning, and at length is gone 15  
 In the wide and antique eyes, which still appear  
 To watch, across the castrate lawn,  
 The haggard daylight steer.

1950, 1957

## Lamarck Elaborated<sup>7</sup>

*"The environment creates the organ"*<sup>8</sup>

The Greeks were wrong who said our eyes have rays;  
 Not from these sockets or these sparkling poles  
 Comes the illumination of our days.  
 It was the sun that bored these two blue holes.  
 It was the song of doves begot the ear 5  
 And not the ear that first conceived of sound:  
 That organ bloomed in vibrant atmosphere,  
 As music conjured Ilium<sup>9</sup> from the ground.  
 The yielding water, the repugnant stone,  
 The poisoned berry and the flaring rose 10  
 Attired in sense the tactless finger-bone  
 And set the taste-buds and inspired the nose.  
 Out of our vivid ambience came unsought  
 All sense but that most formidably dim.  
 The shell of balance<sup>1</sup> rolls in seas of thought. 15  
 It was the mind that taught the head to swim.  
 Newtonian numbers<sup>2</sup> set to cosmic lyres  
 Whelmed us in whirling worlds we could not know,  
 And by the imagined floods of our desires  
 The voice of Sirens gave us vertigo. 20

1956, 1957

6. The toad is a member of the class of animals called Amphibia.

7. In *Things of This World* (1956); included in the collected *Poems* (1957).

8. Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) was a great French biologist whose environmental theory is epitomized in this epigraph. A forerunner of Darwin, he glimpsed better than others the truth of ecological change (organic adaptation); effectively, if unwittingly, he rendered obsolete the idea of a pre-ordained human existence. The poem wittily transposes these ideas from the area of organic evolution to that of the imagina-

tion and emotional experience.

9. That is, Troy, destroyed by war ca. 1184 B.C.; its location was forgotten until Homer "conjured" it "from the ground" ca. 850 B.C., with the "music" of the *Iliad*.

1. The inner ear, whose "shell" contains the body's "balance" mechanism.

2. "Numbers," especially in the eighteenth century, designated the ordered rhythm of verse, and in that century Newtonian physics provided a rhythmic ordering of physical laws both terrestrial and "cosmic."

# Bibliography

The introductory essays for the authors and texts represented in this work provide fundamental bibliographies. A library collection for reference purposes should contain at least the following works: *The Literature of the American People*, edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn and others; *Literary History of the United States*, three volumes, edited by R. E. Spiller and others; *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, by J. D. Hart, valuable for authoritative brief references to authors and subjects; and *Harvard Guide to American History*, edited by O. Handlin and others, a comprehensive bibliography of American history, literature, and society. The bibliography which follows is a brief classified list of standard works of reference and history in the fields represented by the literature collected in the present volumes.

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